



City of Austin

Leslie Pool, Council Member District 7

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2107, Fax (512) 978-2117

Dear Neighbor,

Hello and welcome to the Spring 2016 District 7 Town Hall! I really appreciate you joining me and my staff for this event.

As you know, Austin is facing a lot of tough challenges – but we have also been presented with important opportunities, as well. I envision an Austin where communities can come together to engage in public discourse, work collaboratively on solutions, and seize these opportunities to improve our city. The most effective and long-lasting way to do that is by empowering our communities to become active participants in our city.

This town hall is a part of that goal.

I've organized this particular town hall into two parts. First, a City Services Information Fair where city officials are ready and eager to engage with you on the different things we are doing as a city. In this packet, you'll find a "Scavenger Hunt" list – make your way through the information fair finding the answers to the "Scavenger Hunt" questions, and then check your answers with one of my staff members when you have finished!

The second part of my town hall will focus on issues related to mobility, such as pedestrian and bicycle safety, public transit, and our roads – and will feature a panel of experts from a number of different agencies and programs.

Finally, I have also provided you with important information in this packet on a number of initiatives my colleagues and I are currently working on at the city.

This information is only a first step. I encourage you to take this information and then engage with my office and with other neighbors on ways we can work collaboratively to improve our District 7 community.

You can reach my office through a number of different ways, including: via email at District7@AustinTexas.gov, on Twitter at @District7Staff, on Instagram at District7Staff, on Pinterest at District7Staff, and over the phone at 512-978-2107. My staff is also currently working on a number of exciting initiatives to help expand the number of ways you can engage with us.

Thank you again for joining us. I look forward to collaborating with you going forward.

Best,

Leslie Pool
Council Member, District 7



City of Austin

**Leslie Pool, Council Member
District 7**

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2107, Fax (512) 978-2117

City Council Initiatives: 2015-2016

Council Member Pool envisions a collaborative Austin where residents work together to build strong, livable communities. She has been proud to work with her City Council colleagues on a number of initiatives to strengthen our communities in District 7 and across the city.

These City Council initiatives will help ensure:

- ★ **Quality of Life for Communities**, by investing in our city's parks, pools, libraries, mobility infrastructure, and other community assets;
- ★ **Affordability and Economic Opportunity**, by lowering city property taxes, increasing the homestead exemption, and through other strategies;
- ★ **Safe Communities**, by supporting our police and emergency service workers and finding solutions for flooding problems, among other things;
- ★ **Protection of Natural Resources**, by reducing carbon emissions, increasing renewable energy, and other initiatives; and
- ★ **Good Governance and Fair Play**, by reforming lobbyist rules and campaign finance reporting, among other things.



Ensuring Quality of Life for Communities

Keeping Our Parks, Playgrounds, and Facilities Safe

Council invested in the staff necessary to keep Austin's playgrounds safe and accessible.

- The Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) is responsible for maintaining many of the city's important community assets, including almost 100 parks, over 300 playgrounds, and over 1,000 playground pieces and components.¹
- However, many playscapes throughout Austin are in need of upkeep and repair or are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Some playscapes are as old as 35 years old.
- Council invested in staff to inspect and repair Austin's parks, helping ensure all Austin residents can continue to enjoy the city's treasured parks and playgrounds.

Improving Parks throughout the City

Council approved a large investment in the city's parks.

- Council Members collaborated and combined their various parks-related efforts to invest more than \$1 million in parks across the city.
- The Open Space Committee, which Council Member Pool chairs, worked to oversee implementation of this funding in parks across the city, including Lucy Read School Park in District 7.

Investing in Transportation Improvements and Safe Routes to Schools

Council invested significantly in transportation infrastructure, especially for pedestrian and bike safety.

- Austin faces major transportation safety challenges. Last year, 102 people were killed in a traffic collision in Austin – with many more seriously injured.²
- Council invested nearly \$22 million from a fund known as the "Quarter-Cent Fund" in mobility projects (roughly \$2 million per Council district) to help improve pedestrian and bike safety.
- In District 7, Council Member Pool prioritized projects that help improved safety in the areas near our schools, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian crossing beacons, traffic calming, and signals.

Investing in Much-Needed Improvements at Northwest Pool

Council approved much-needed repairs to Northwest Pool in District 7, extending its life.

- Northwest Pool is one of the most-used pools in Austin, with over 15,000 Austin residents living within a mile of the pool.³
- However, Northwest Pool also needed repairs badly – the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) had identified it as unlikely to survive five years without major repairs or replacement.¹
- Council approved a significant investment in repairs at Northwest Pool that has fixed major leakage problems and extended the life of the pool so that residents can continue to enjoy it.

¹ "FY 2015-16 Five-Year Financial Forecast and Economic Outlook," City of Austin.

² City of Austin Vision Zero Action Plan, Vision Zero Task Force (Draft 5/12/16).

³ "Aquatic Facilities Needs Assessment," Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

Restoring Our Libraries to Full Service

Council restored Austin libraries to pre-recession service levels.

- During the 2008 recession, the Austin Public Library was forced to cut its branch hours to deal with reduced funding. In 2014, Council partially restored those cuts.
- Now, Council has fully restored those cuts, bringing Austin libraries back to pre-recession levels and ensuring residents have full access to their community libraries.

Working with Communities to Solve Code and Public Safety Problems

Council adopted a program to educate communities and address safety and code enforcement issues.

- Austin is currently facing a number of code enforcement issues, including those involving ‘repeat offender properties’ that repeatedly violate city code and fail to comply in a timely manner.
- A recent study by a group at the University of Texas Law School found a number of issues regarding repeat offender properties in Austin. For instance, over the span of two years, Austin residents made over 280 code complaints against almost 30 repeat offender properties.⁴
- To address this, Council established the Residents Advocacy Project, through which the city contracted with a local nonprofit to send legal experts out into communities to work with residents on addressing code enforcement issues and educate them about their legal rights and options.

Expanding Summer Camp in Underserved Neighborhoods

Council expanded established youth programs that provide Austin children with valuable learning opportunities into underserved areas across the city.

- Every summer, Austin runs the Summer Playgrounds program, in which parents drop off their children free of charge for supervised play, activities, and educational speakers at city playgrounds.
- Austin also offers the Roving Leaders program, which teaches teenagers the critical thinking and life skills they need to manage difficult situations, such as those involving violence and addiction.
- City Council invested in expanding these summer youth programs into underserved areas of the city.

Helping Underserved Communities Access Healthy, Affordable Foods

Council adopted a pilot program to help underserved communities access healthy, affordable food.

- Many less affluent communities in the Austin area do not have access to healthy foods. Roughly 17 percent of Travis County residents lack access to nutritious foods.⁵
- To address this, Council adopted a Healthy Foods Initiative to:
 - Help local corner stores in low- to moderate-income areas offer healthy food;
 - Support farm markets and schools and community centers; and
 - Expand an existing non-profit incentive program that provides a match for the money low-income families spend on healthy foods (up to \$20 per week).

⁴ Way, Sanchez & Petersen, “An Analysis of 2-5-2 Repeat Offender Program and Efforts to Address Dangerous Rental Properties,” UT Law Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic (June 2015).

⁵ “Community Health Assessment,” Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (December 2012).

Ensuring Affordability and Economic Opportunity

Lowering City Property Taxes

Council adopted a budget that lowered the city property tax bill for the average property owner.

- Austin residents pay property taxes to a number of different entities, including the school district (52 percent of the median property tax bill), the city (22 percent), the county (17 percent), the Central Health District (5 percent), and Austin Community College (4 percent).⁶
- With its 2015-2016 budget, Council lowered the actual dollar amount that the average property owner would owe in city property taxes – for the first time in recent memory.

Increasing the City's Homestead Exemption

Council significantly increased the homestead exemption, helping lower residents' property tax bills.

- The Texas Constitution allows cities to establish a “homestead exemption” to provide greater affordability by lowering a property's taxable value.
- The state also requires that cities establish this homestead exemption either as a percentage of the property value, or as a flat \$5,000 minimum. In 2014, the previous City Council took the first step and established the minimum \$5,000 homestead exemption.
- Last year, Council raised the homestead exemption to 6 percent, lowering the taxable value of residents' homes.

Ensuring a Fair Playing Field for the Austin Energy Consumer Advocate

Council provided more time during the Austin Energy (AE) rate review so that the independent consumer advocate could adequately prepare and better represent the interests of AE customers.

- AE is required to review and revise its rates once every five years so that they accurately reflect changes in conditions and costs.
- This year, part of this process involved appointing an independent consumer advocate to represent residential and small commercial customers during this process. However, the timeline for the process did not give the consumer advocate enough time to prepare.
- Council amended the timeline to give the consumer advocate enough time to adequately prepare in order to effectively advocate on behalf of residential and small commercial ratepayers.

Providing Internship Opportunities for Underserved Youth

Council invested in Austin's future workforce by providing critical internship opportunities for underserved high school students.

- Internships are an important way for Austin's youth – especially those in underserved communities – to learn critical job skills and gain important work experience.
- Council invested existing resources in 50 internship opportunities with the Austin Airport and the Austin Convention Center for underserved high school students over 14 years old.

⁶ “Financial Forecast & Economic Outlook: FY 2016-2020,” City of Austin.

Keeping Austin's Music Industry Strong

Council made key investments in the city's Music Office to help address the music industry's needs.

- The "Austin Music Census" report revealed that Austin's music industry is quickly approaching a tipping point that could seriously damage it.
- Like many residents, Austin's musicians are facing an affordability crisis – nearly 1 in 3 musicians surveyed in the Austin Music Census are earning \$15,000 per year or less in pre-tax income.⁷
- Council invested in additional staff and funding for the Music Office to, among other things: develop a strategic plan for the music industry, expand a program that helps music venues improve their sound quality, and assist musicians with permitting requirements.

Ensuring We Keep Our Communities Safe

Maintaining a Police Presence in Our Neighborhoods during SXSW

Council provided funding to maintain police presence in communities across Austin during South by Southwest (SXSW).

- SXSW is one of several major events Austin hosts every year. In the past, the high level of downtown activity during SXSW has caused the Austin Police Department (APD) to focus its resources on downtown for the duration of the event.
- This year, Council identified funding for maintaining a police presence in communities across Austin during SXSW – and directed the City Manager to find ways to continue maintaining police service levels during major events going forward.

Ensuring Austin's Emergency Medical Services Can Safely Serve Austinites

Council moved Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff to a 42-hour work week.

- EMS medics in Austin have been under tremendous pressure, working 48 hours per week, plus overtime and on-call hours, while medics in peer cities generally worked 40 or 42 hours per week.⁵
- A 2013 audit by the City Auditor found that nearly 9 in 10 EMS staff members frequently feel fatigued – while a full half of all EMS staff felt that this fatigue impacted the quality of their work.⁸
- Council helped address these stress and safety issues at EMS by providing the 15 new staff positions needed to convert EMS to a 42-hour work week.

Finding Solutions for Austin's Flooding Problems

Council established a task force to examine Austin's flooding issues and make recommendations.

- Central Texas is one of the most flash flood-prone areas in the entire country due to its terrain and shallow soil. This has garnered it the nickname, "Flash Flood Alley."⁹
- Austin has experienced multiple serious floods over the decades – including several in recent years – that have claimed the lives of a number of people and destroyed families' homes.
- Council appointed a 22-member Flood Mitigation Task Force to examine flooding issues in Austin and recommend strategies for addressing those issues and protecting our residents.

⁷ "The Austin Music Census," Titan Music Group, LLC (1 June 2015).

⁸ "Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (ATCEMS) Outcomes Audit," Austin Office of the City Auditor (September 2013).

⁹ "Managing floods in Flash Flood Alley," Lower Colorado River Authority.

Ensuring We Protect Our Natural Resources

Establishing a Community Climate Plan to Reduce Carbon Emissions

Council adopted a plan to achieve ambitious carbon emissions reduction goals.

- Climate change is impacting Central Texas – worsening our severe drought and flash-flooding issues.¹⁰
- In 2014, Council established a goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for the entire Austin community by 2050.
- Last year, Council adopted the blueprint for reaching its net-zero emissions goals, the Austin Community Climate Plan. It also established a Joint Sustainability Committee tasked with overseeing implementation of the plan and related policy matters.

Investing in Solar Energy

Council significantly increased Austin Energy's investment in solar energy, a key renewable resource.

- Over the course of the last decade, Council has set ambitious goals to help the city reduce its carbon emissions and meet the majority of the city's energy needs through renewable resources.
- Last year, Council continued to act on these goals and significantly increased Austin Energy's investment in solar energy while taking advantage of historically low solar prices.

Protecting the Monarch Butterfly

City Council acted to reverse the decline of the monarch butterfly by incorporating milkweed, which the butterflies rely on to reproduce, into city properties.

- Austin is an important part in the life cycle of Texas' official state insect, the monarch butterfly. It is one of the first U.S. cities where the butterflies lay their eggs during their spring migration north.¹¹
- Milkweed plants are crucial to the monarch butterfly's reproduction process – and the loss of milkweed has led to declining monarch butterfly populations.
- To help protect the monarch butterfly, Council established a process for incorporating milkweed into city properties, such as city-owned buildings and the city's parks and open spaces.

Ensuring CodeNEXT Protects Our Natural Resources

Council provided funding for a green infrastructure consultant to advise on how to rewrite the city's land use regulations in a way that protects Austin's natural resources.

- Austin is currently working on CodeNEXT, an important initiative to rewrite the regulations on how land can be used and developed in the city.
- Council provided the funding to hire a consultant with expertise in green infrastructure who can advise on ways the city can integrate parks, working landscapes, and other open spaces responsibly into the city's new land use regulations.
- This will also help the CodeNEXT process further align with "Imagine Austin," the city's comprehensive plan, which includes green infrastructure as one of its main principles.

¹⁰ National Climate Assessment, U.S. Global Change Research Program (2014).

¹¹ Patrick Fitzgerald, "Austin, Texas Creates Habitat for the Declining Monarch Butterfly," National Wildlife Federation (3 August 2015).

Ensuring Good Government and Fair Play

Ensuring Transparency for CodeNEXT Policymaking

Council ensured that important CodeNEXT meetings are videotaped and available for online viewing.

- Austin is currently working on CodeNEXT, an important initiative to rewrite the regulations on how land can be used and developed in the city.
- To engage the public and provide feedback on CodeNEXT, Council created a Land Development Code Advisory Group (CAG), with members appointed by Council and the City Manager. However, CAG meetings were originally not slated to be videotaped or broadcast.
- Council approved an item that ensures Austin residents are able to watch these important CAG meetings and participate in the CodeNEXT process. Residents may watch these meetings online at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/atxn>.

Improving the City's Community Engagement Efforts

Council appointed a task force to review the city's community engagement efforts and make recommendations for ways to further engage the community on policymaking.

- Historically, Austin had an "at-large" Council system, in which voters across the entire city elected every member of City Council. In 2012, Austin voters approved a "district-based" Council system, in which Council Members were elected from specific Council districts, rather than citywide.
- This district-based system was established, in part, to increase representation of different communities across the city.
- In 2015, the new district-based Council took further steps to increase community and neighborhood representation at City Hall by establishing a task force to review the city's current community engagement efforts and recommend ways to improve them.

Reforming the City's Lobbyist Rules

Council strengthened the city's lobbyist requirements and improved enforcement of lobbying rules.

- Many of the city's existing lobbyist rules have loopholes and go unenforced.
- Council addressed this by passing a resolution calling for increased financial disclosure, increased enforcement of city lobbying rules, and the elimination of loopholes that allowed part-time lobbyists not to register. The city's law department is currently drafting the full ordinance.

Modernizing the City's Campaign Finance Reporting

Council improved transparency by implementing an electronic campaign finance reporting system.

- Previously, candidates running for local office in Austin submitted their campaign finance reports on paper forms or via PDF files.
- However, these formats make it difficult to move this information into spreadsheets for analysis.
- Council modernized the city's campaign finance reporting system and increased transparency by phasing in an electronic campaign finance reporting system that would make data analysis easier.

District 7 Office

Council Member Leslie Pool

Council Committees

- Open Spaces, Chair
- Austin Energy Oversight, Vice Chair
- Audit and Finance
- Economic Opportunity
- Public Safety

Biographical Information

- Term of Office: 2015 – 2017
- Neighborhood: Rosedale

District 7 Staff

- Amy Smith, Chief of Staff
- Louisa Brinsmade, Policy Advisor
- Michael Gaudini, Policy Advisor
- Leslie Hethcox, Executive Assistant
- Brian Jackson, Policy Aide

You can contact District 7 staff at District7@AustinTexas.gov. It's helpful to include your street address in your email, so our staff can more quickly process your request.

District 7 Newsletter

Keep in the loop on what is happening in District 7 by signing up for our online newsletter:
<http://tinyurl.com/district7list>

District 7 Information

District 7 Boundaries

District 7 is home to a diverse group of neighborhoods stretching from the southernmost boundary on West 45th Street out to the city limits.

For an interactive District 7 map that can provide interesting neighborhood and Census Bureau information and let you know whether you live in District 7: <http://tinyurl.com/atx7map>

District 7 Profile

Population

- Total Population: 80,620
 - Hispanic or Latino: 22%
 - White: 58%
 - Black: 8%
 - Asian: 10%
 - Other/2+ Races: 3%

Housing

- Total Housing Units: 41,777
- Pop. in Housing Units: 80,209
 - Owners: 49%
 - Renters: 51%

Density

- Area (Square Miles): 28.31 sq. mi.
- Population Density: 2,848/sq. mi.
- Housing Density: 1,476/sq. mi.

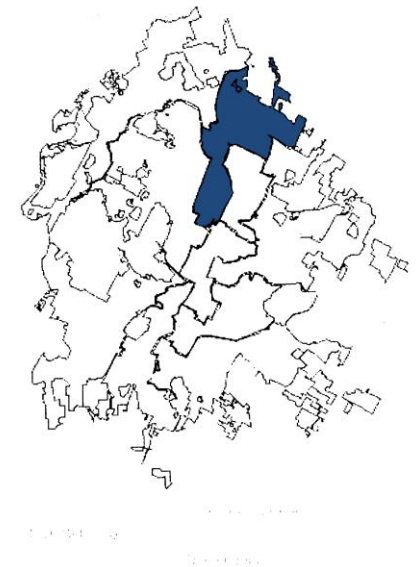


City of Austin

**Leslie Pool, Council Member
District 7**

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2107, Fax (512) 978-2117

Constituent Services



Frequently Asked Questions On:

- Contact Information
- Public Safety
- Public Utilities
- Traffic and Transportation

For More Information:
District7@AustinTexas.gov

Constituent FAQ

General Information

➤ What services does the city offer?

The City of Austin offers a lot of services, including:

- Public safety;
- Emergency response;
- Parks, pools, and libraries;
- Road and sidewalk maintenance;
- Zoning and code enforcement;
- Trash and recycling pick-up; and
- Water and energy utilities.

➤ Who do I contact with questions about city services?

You can contact the city through our 3-1-1 service:

- **By Phone** at 3-1-1.
- **By Smart Phone** via the 3-1-1 app
- **Online** via: www.austintexas.gov/department/311.

District 7 residents can also contact Council Member Pool's office on any city-related issue or matter by:

- **Email:** District7@AustinTexas.gov
- **Phone:** (512) 978-2107
- **Online** via: www.austintexas.gov/department/district-7

When contacting Council Member Pool's office, it is helpful to include your street address, so our staff can more quickly process your request.

Public Safety

➤ Who should I call for emergency or immediate public safety help?

Dial 9-1-1 if you need emergency or other timely law enforcement and public safety-related assistance.

➤ How do I speak with an officer about XYZ problem in my neighborhood?

Every part of the city has its own "district representative." These are police officers who serve as liaisons between neighborhoods and the police department and can help answer questions, solve problems, and generally assist residents.

For more information:
www.austintexas.gov/department/apd-district-representatives

Parks and Public Spaces

➤ How do I get a park project/bike lane/sidewalk/etc. in my community?

Austin partners with neighborhoods with the Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP). NPP can help residents develop a small- to medium-sized project and can provide partial funding.

For more information on NPP:
www.austintexas.gov/neighborhoodpartnering

Transportation

➤ How do I request a traffic signal?

You can request a traffic signal or a pedestrian crossing signal through 3-1-1. City staff will review and evaluate these requests.

➤ How can I get help with traffic on my street?

Austin runs a request-based Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) program through which residents can apply to have traffic calming devices installed on their streets.

For more information on LATM:
www.austintexas.gov/department/local-area-traffic-management

Public Utilities

➤ What do I do if I think my water bill is too high?

Contact customer care at 512-494-9400. Staff can help you troubleshoot and provide options to help identify the problem. If the issue continues to be unresolved, you can request a hearing with a third party.

For more information:

- www.austintexas.gov/highwaterbill
- www.austinenergy.com/wps/portal/ae/residential/your-bill/bill-disputes

Scavenger Hunt Instructions

Step 1. Read over the “Scavenger Hunt” questions attached to this sheet.

Step 2. Talk to the different city officials who have set up tables at the City Services Informational Fair.

Step 3. Fill in the answers to the questions on the “Scavenger Hunt” list.

Step 4. Bring your answer sheet to our District 7 staff at the sign-in desk so we can check your answers.

Step 5. Congratulate yourself on a job well done!

District 7 Town Hall – Scavenger Hunt!

Name _____

Instructions: Welcome to your District 7 Town Hall! Below, you'll find 20 questions about different city programs and services. You can find the answer to each of these questions here at the town hall – so please join us in exploring each of the informational tables and learning more about the city. When you're finished, see our staff at the sign-in table to check your answers!

Mobility

1. Austin has a “_____ Streets Policy” to design, operate, and maintain a connected network of city streets that serves all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists of all ages and capabilities.

Did You Know: Austin is currently updating its Sidewalk Master Plan to help update its sidewalk management policies and bring the city up to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

2. Austin currently has about 2,400 miles of existing sidewalk. However, it also has about _____ miles of gaps where sidewalk is missing. Fully filling in these gaps and completing the city's sidewalk network is projected to cost about \$_____.
3. Austin has committed to a “_____” goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries through a holistic and data-driven approach to transportation engineering, land development, education, and enforcement.
4. Name a street in District 7 where a mobility project is underway or will be implemented: _____ . (Hint: See Capital Planning Office Table or Mobility Projects Map.)

Did You Know: Austin's Urban Trails Master Plan envisions “a citywide network of non-motorized, multi-use pathways that are used by bicyclists, walkers and runners for both transportation and recreation purposes.” For more information, please visit the city's website at: <https://austintexas.gov/urbantrails>.

5. How many miles of completed Urban Trails does Austin have today? ____
6. How many miles of high-priority trails does Austin plan to build over the next two decades? ____

Did You Know: CapMetro's service area not only includes Austin, but also Jonestown, Lago Vista, Leander, Manor, Point Venture, San Leanna, Volente, and other parts of Travis and Williamson Counties.

7. CapMetro is currently developing its ten-year service plan, “_____,” which will help it evaluate its current system and identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
8. CapMetro currently has _____ (number) MetroRail stations in District 7. (For a bonus, name those stations: _____.)
9. What is the name of the frequent bus service (first launched in 2014) that runs along the Burnet and Lamar corridors? _____

Parks and Recreation

10. Most of Austin's pools and other aquatics facilities were built between the years _____ and _____.
11. Last year, City Council invested in extending the life of Northwest Pool so that residents could continue to enjoy it in the coming years. Prior to this, the Parks and Recreation Department had estimated it was unlikely to survive _____ years without major repairs.

Budget

Did You Know: The City of Austin is offering an interactive budget simulator that allows you to choose how to fund a variety of city services, and shows in real time how these choices impact your annual tax and utility bills. You can find that at the website listed in Question #12 below.

12. Austin residents can learn about opportunities to provide input on the city budget at austintexas.gov/_____.
13. The city offers access to its financial information, including past and present city budgets, via an online portal, " _____ " (available at austintexas.gov/finance).

Water Use and Watershed Protection

14. Austin's source for drinking water is the _____ River.
15. Austin currently has _____ (number) water treatment plants. (For a bonus, name them: _____).
16. When it is raining, be sure to check _____ (website address) to see if there are any roads closed in the Central Texas area.
17. If you have a drainage issue in your neighborhood, you should report it to _____.

Boards and Commission

Did You Know: City Council uses a system of citizen volunteers who sit on different boards and commissions to discuss, vet, hear testimony on, and advise Council on different policy ideas.

18. Please name a board or commission and Council Member Pool's appointee to that board or commission: _____ and _____.

Miscellaneous

Please list two other interesting facts you learned at the City Services Information Fair today!

19.

20.

Find us online!

Learn more about our programs and initiatives by visiting our website, AustinTexas.gov/Transportation. Connect and engage with us on our social media channels: [Facebook.com/AustinMobility](https://www.facebook.com/AustinMobility) and [@AustinMobility](https://twitter.com/AustinMobility) on Twitter!

For those interested in our bicycle and pedestrian initiatives: [Facebook.com/AustinBikePed](https://www.facebook.com/AustinBikePed) [@AustinBikePed](https://twitter.com/AustinBikePed)



City of Austin
Austin Transportation Department
3701 Lake Austin Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78703
512.974.1150

2015 Annual Report

City of Austin
Austin Transportation Department

Connecting
you all
around
Austin!

Who We Are

The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) provides a safe, efficient, innovative, cost-effective and sustainable transportation system for our community. This system connects roadways, bikeways, walkways and transit systems to provide residents improved access and mobility. *We help keep Austin moving.*

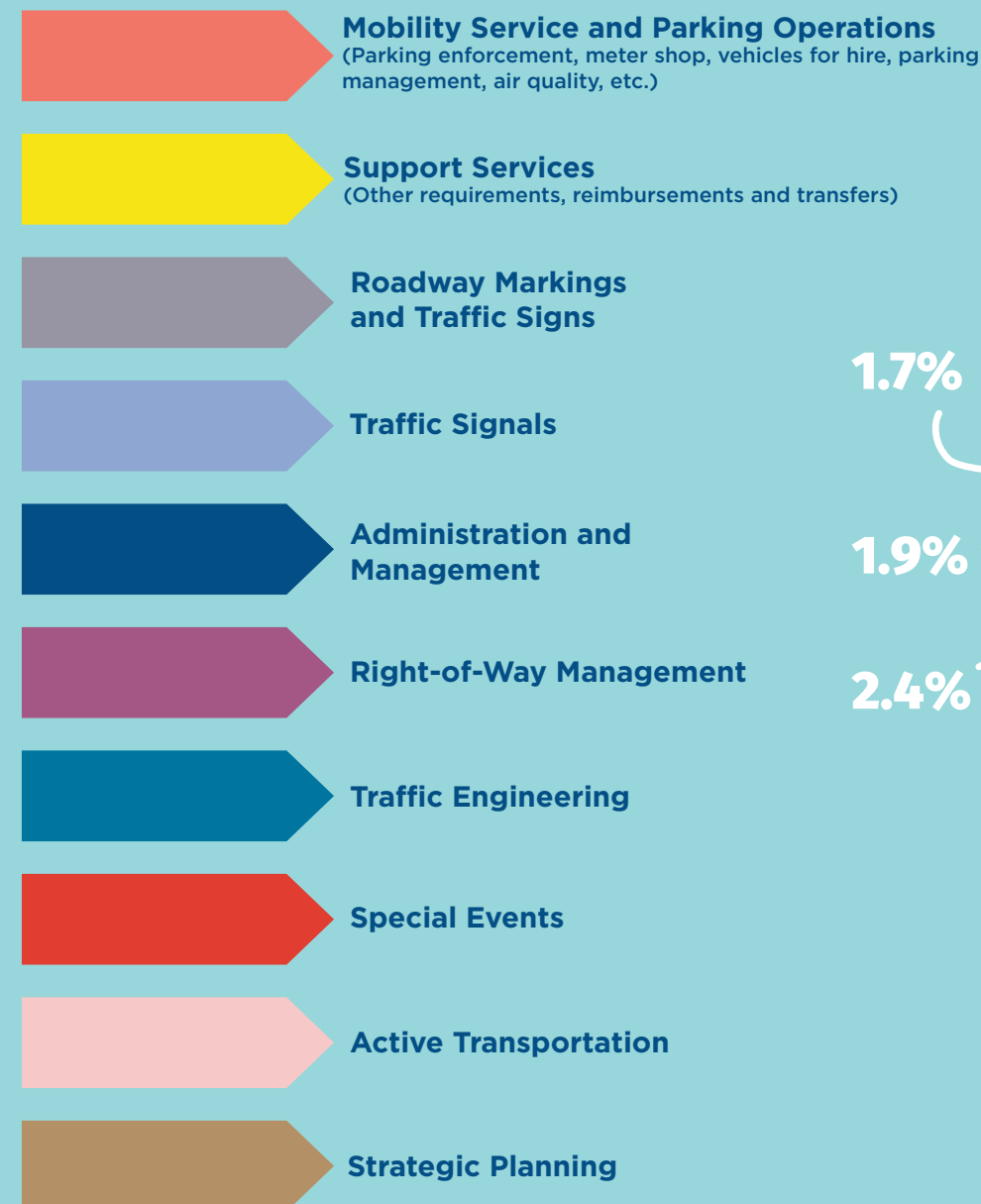
Transportation Safety

Public safety is one of the primary responsibilities of local government, of which transportation is a large component.

Transportation safety requires cooperation between City departments and other local and state agencies as well as community stakeholders and residents. In 2015, safety continued to be the No. 1 priority for ATD; the department implemented initiatives such as Don't Block the Box, ground transportation enforcement, roadway engineering improvements and much more.

ATD is also committed to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2025. These deaths represent a preventable public health issue and any death is too many. That's why ATD worked with multiple City departments in 2015 to help draft the City's Vision Zero Action Plan and intends to present the plan, with staff's final recommendations, to City Council in 2016.

Total ATD Budget for FY 15: \$33,280,875



1.7%

1.9%

2.4%

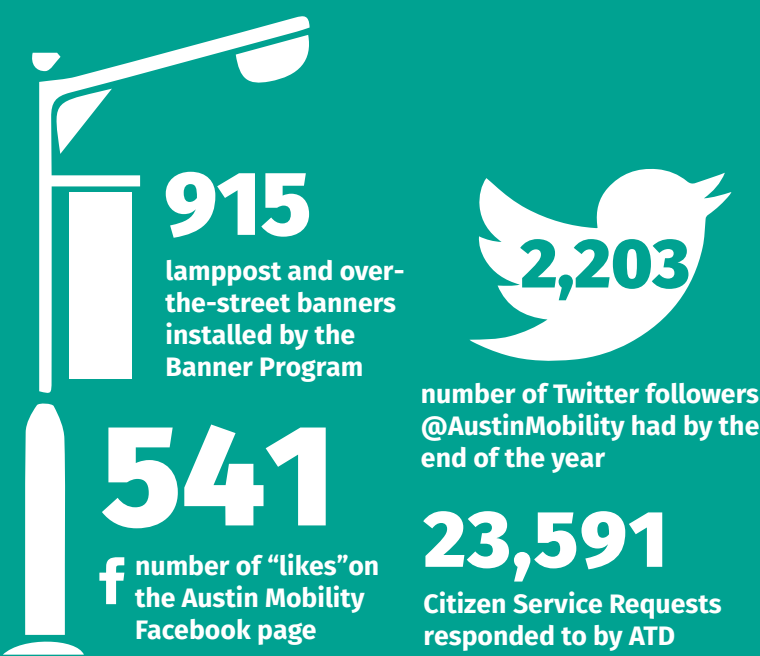
198.5 - Full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) for ATD

*Figures may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding



Community Connections

ATD works hard to connect with stakeholders in a variety of ways including 3-1-1, online, social media, in person and more.

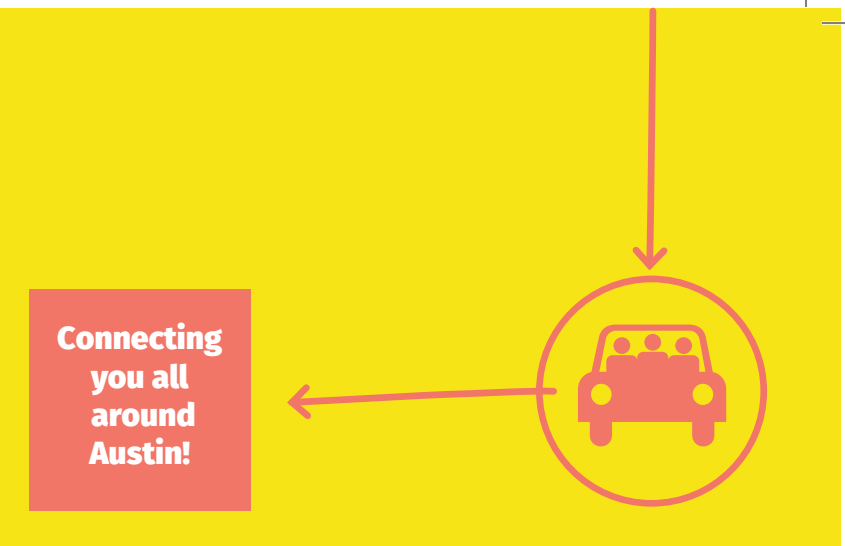
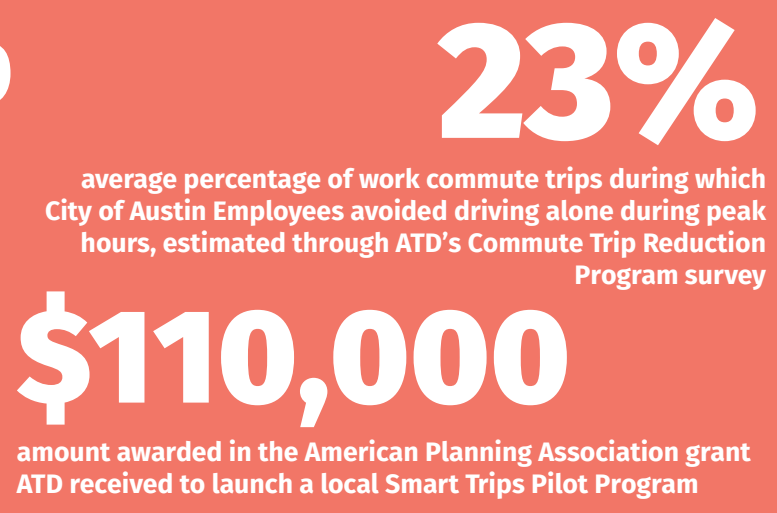


Bridging the Gap

ATD works to fill gaps in funding, planning and actual infrastructure by utilizing a variety of different funding mechanisms, advocating for Transportation Demand Management throughout the community and participating in an assortment of transportation planning events. This helps keep Austin competitive with other cities and on the forefront of transportation innovation and philosophy while also managing the constrained roadways we have today.

\$4 million

amount awarded in the two Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants that the City received to expand B-Cycle Bikeshare and install several Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHBs) and auditory crossing signals citywide

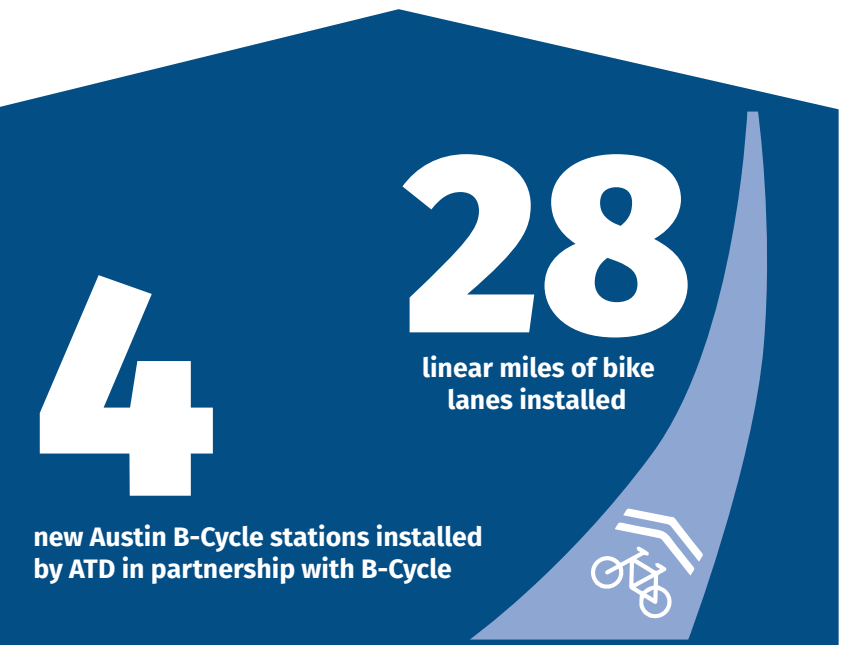
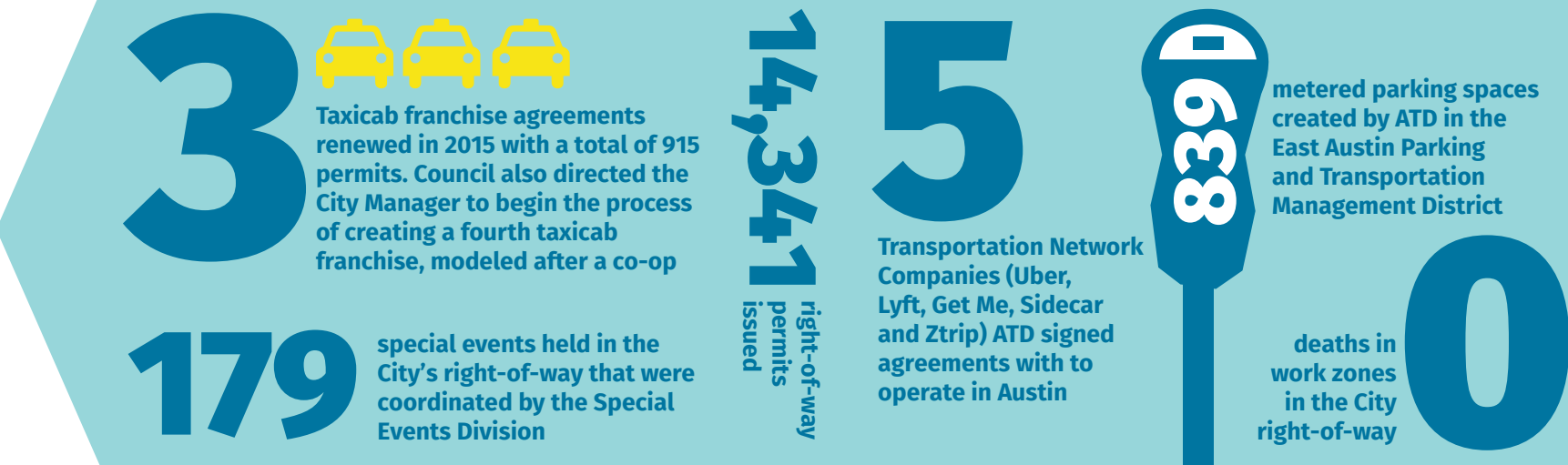


Active & Mobile

ATD works to keep all Austinites moving and an increasing percentage of our population chooses to bike or walk as their primary mode of transportation. Encouraging active transportation and providing safe opportunities to use these modes helps to decrease traffic for all users by shifting short trips off of congested roadways.

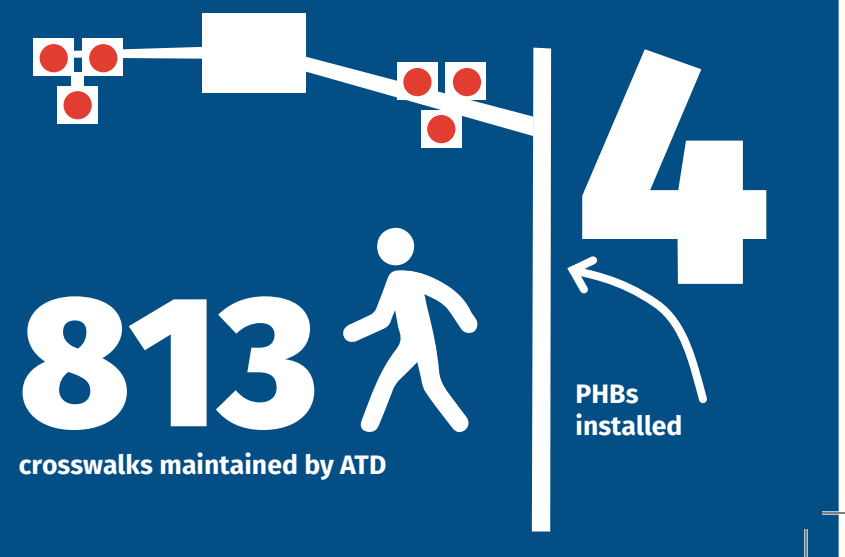
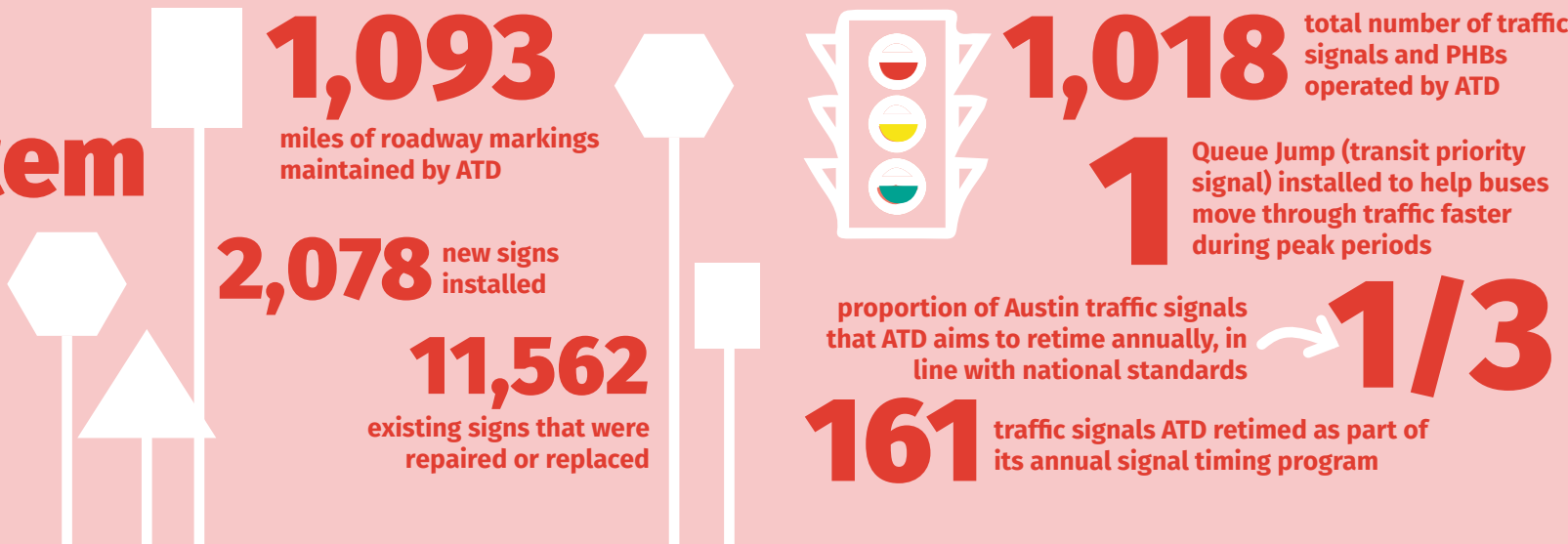
Regulating & Permitting

ATD manages activities in the City's right-of-way to balance demand and keep users safe. This includes permitting vehicles for hire, construction in the right-of-way, special events and more.



Maintaining the Multimodal System

ATD's mission is to serve all roadway users, regardless of mode of travel, age or ability. Clear markings, signs and signals help get people to where they want to go and keep people safe on Austin's roads. Signal management improvements help shorten commutes for all and make transit more reliable.



WHO WE ARE

The Public Works Department designs, manages and inspects capital improvement projects; promotes active transportation; plans and builds sidewalks and urban trails; partners with communities to bring improvements to neighborhoods; and maintains the City of Austin’s network of trails, roadways, sidewalks, bridges, and green infrastructure.

2015

CITY OF AUSTIN
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

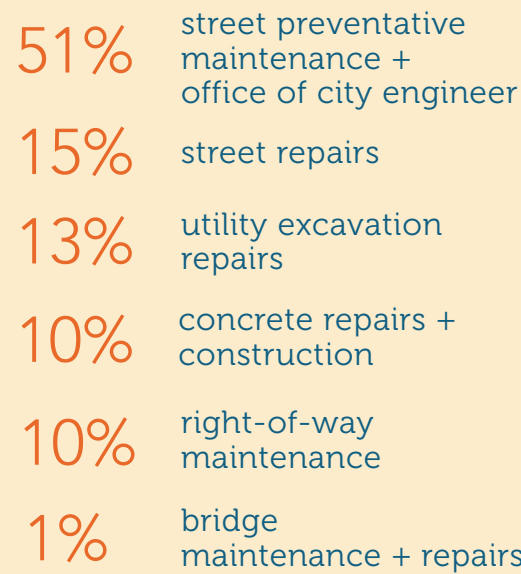
CONNECTING YOU
ALL AROUND AUSTIN



CITY OF AUSTIN
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
2015 ANNUAL REPORT
CONNECTING YOU
ALL AROUND AUSTIN

View the report online!
www.atxpwdannualreport2015.com

STREET + BRIDGE OPERATIONS [TOTAL SPENDING BY TYPE]



TOTAL SPENDING \$37,309,898

FUNDING

A breakdown of where our funding comes from and how it is used:

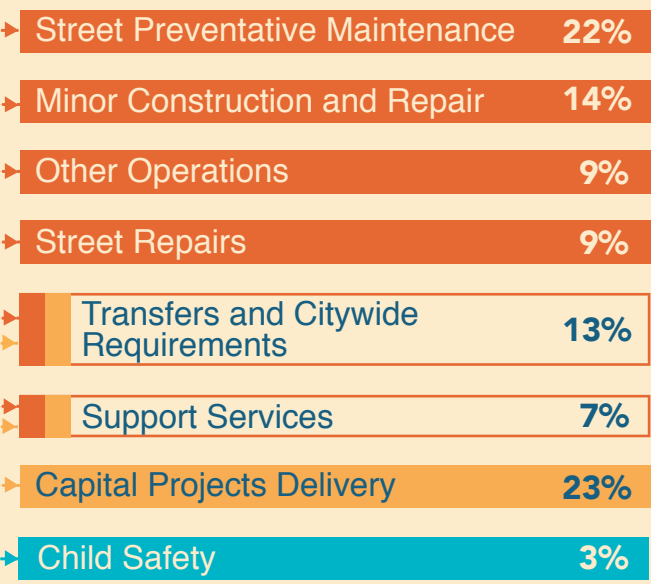
SOURCES OF FUNDS [TOTAL REVENUE BY SOURCE]



APWA ACCREDITED AGENCY

In fiscal year 2015, the department became one of the few cities to earn full accreditation from the American Public Works Association (APWA). The APWA Accreditation program recognizes public works agencies that are leaders in the industry through the application of best technical and business practices. In achieving accreditation, the department became the 101st accredited agency in North America.

USES OF FUNDS [TOTAL SPENDING BY PROGRAM]



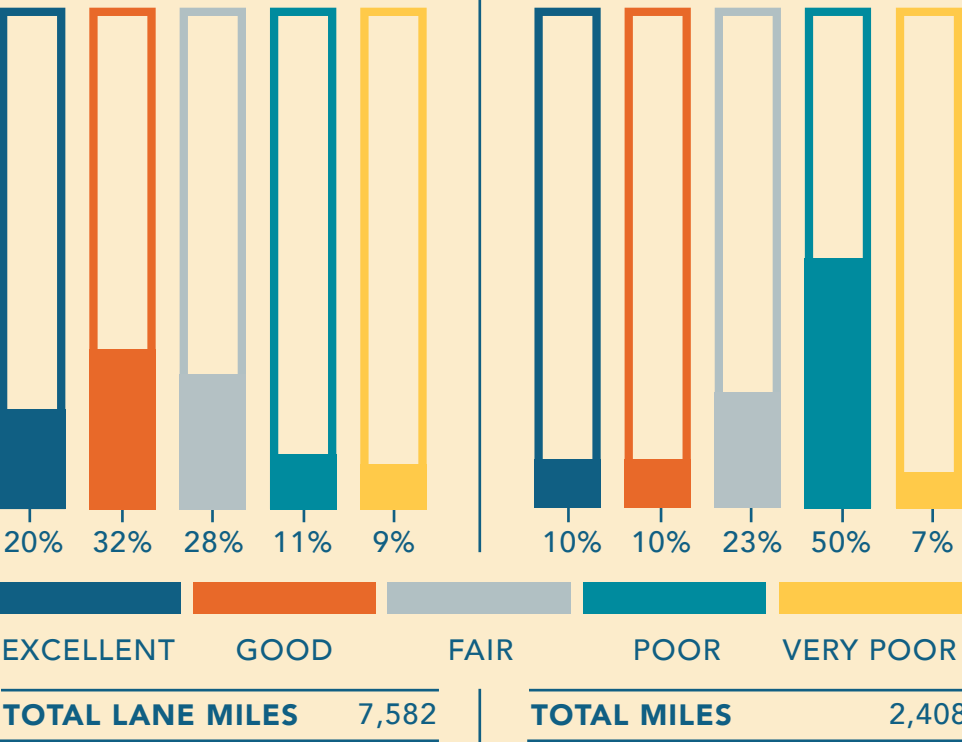
BUILD + MAINTAIN

Our professional and technically skilled staff keeps Austin’s roadways, bridges and trails in good repair by building and maintaining infrastructure throughout the year and around the clock. Along with ensuring vital infrastructure is well maintained, reliable, and safe, we expand and enhance the City’s pedestrian network, prioritizing our work in accordance with the Sidewalk Master Plan.

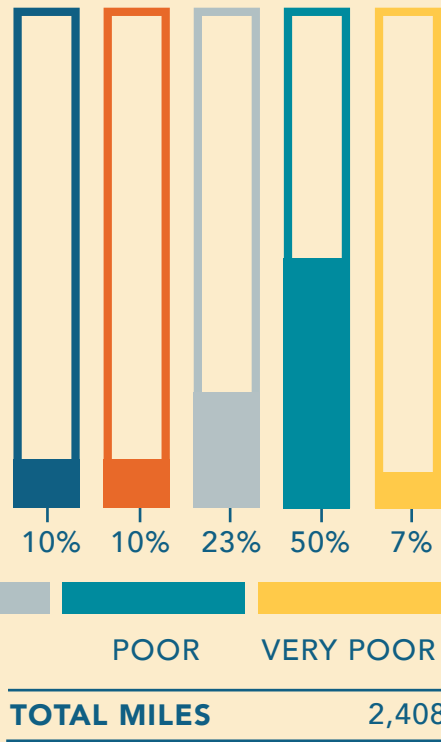


[INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS IN AUSTIN]

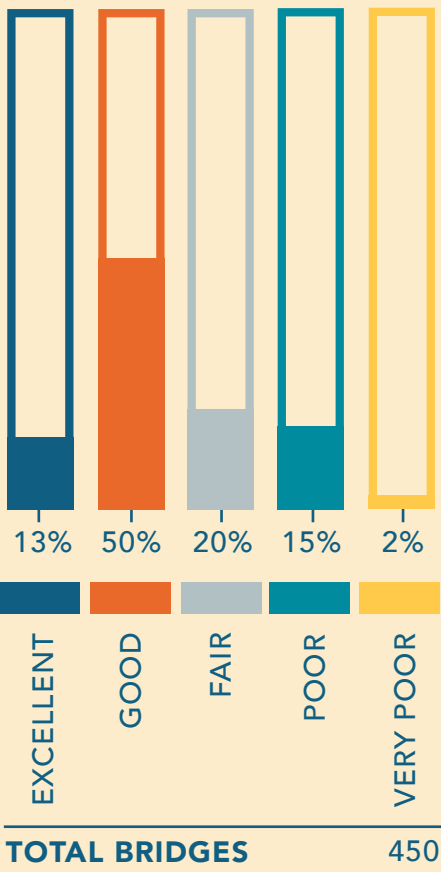
STATE OF THE STREETS



STATE OF THE SIDEWALKS



STATE OF THE BRIDGES



ADA-COMPLIANT SIDEWALKS INSTALLED [MEASURED IN LINEAR FEET]

NEARLY 22 MILES CONSTRUCTED + REPAIRED



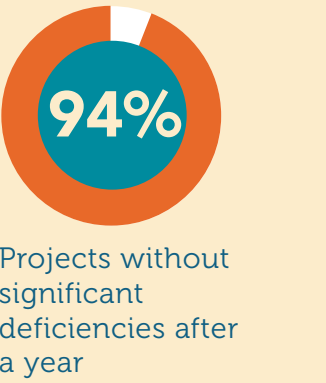
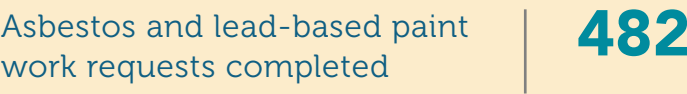
65%
water recovered during
sidewalk cleaning operations

99%
roadway emergencies
addressed within 24 hours

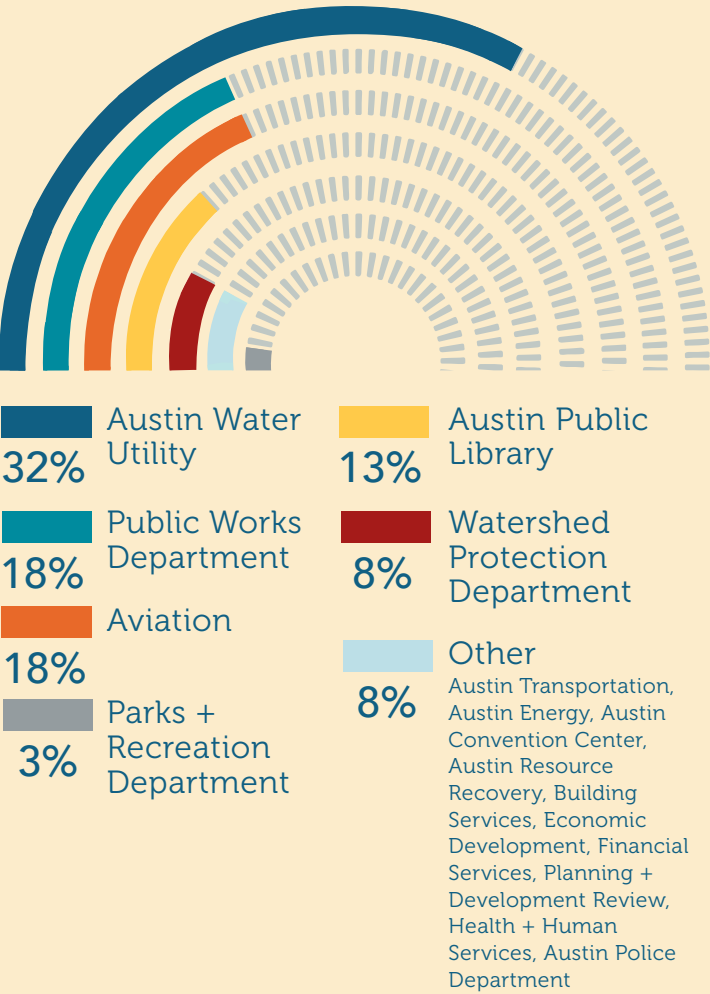
99%
potholes filled within 72
hours of reporting

DESIGN + DELIVER

Department staff manage and deliver capital improvement projects, overseeing them from design to completion. Projects range from iconic, complex projects such as the New Central Library and Second Street Bridge, to smaller-scale street reconstruction, park improvements and water projects.



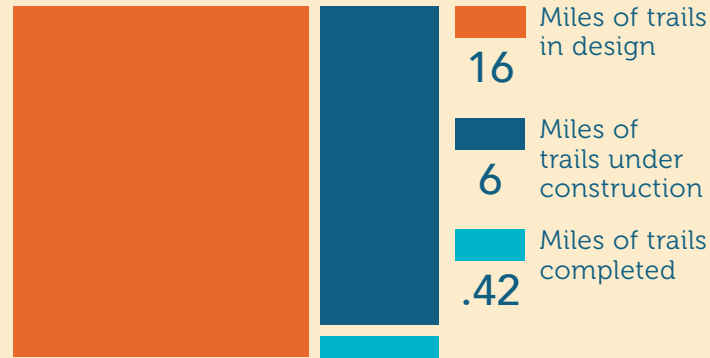
TOTAL SPENDING
[BY SPONSOR DEPARTMENT]



TOTAL SPENDING	\$280.2 MILLION
Total construction value of capital projects portfolio	2.8 BILLION
Construction value of in-house designed projects	23.5 MILLION

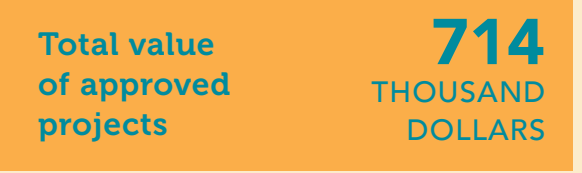
DEVELOP CONNECTED GREENWAYS

Our Urban Trails Program works closely with neighborhoods, fellow departments and elected officials to plan and build the best, most environmentally conscious urban trail system that Austin can offer.



EMPOWER NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILD COMMUNITY

Our award-winning Neighborhood Partnering Program assists neighborhood groups in developing, resourcing, and executing small- to medium-sized improvement projects in the City’s right of way or on City-owned property. Cost sharing can be achieved through cash contributions, in-kind contributions, or donated labor (sweat-equity).

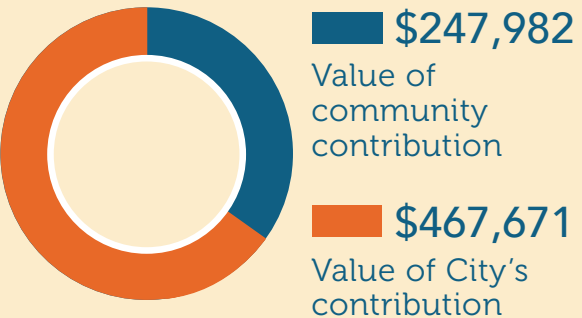


ZIP CODES REPRESENTED
78702
78741
78723
78701
78731
78722
78748
78703
78756
78735
78759

COUNCIL DISTRICTS REPRESENTED
6

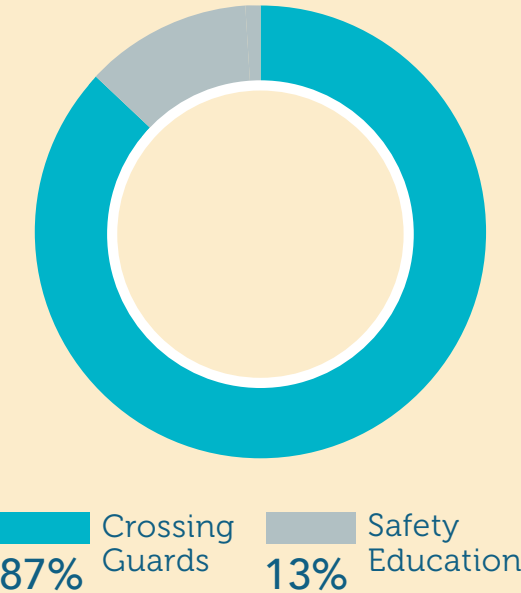


BREAKDOWN OF CONTRIBUTIONS



KIDS + SAFETY

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
[EXPENDITURES]



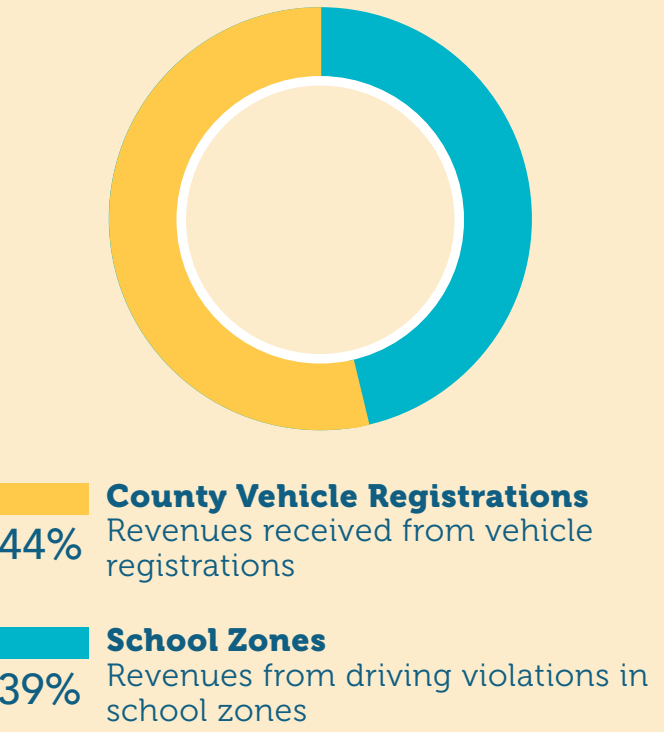
Our Safe Routes to School program helps Austin’s children travel safely to school by educating students on pedestrian and bicycle safety and providing crossing guards at crucial intersections. We also partner with schools to encourage more active transportation through events, programming and educational initiatives.

Crossing Guards	230	Participating Schools	96
Schools engaged in Safe Routes to School initial planning	25	Participating School Districts	7

Trained in safe street crossing, bicycle safety, safe bus riding fundamentals, safe rail + train procedures

51,165 STUDENTS

CHILD SAFETY REVENUE
[TOTAL REVENUE]



TOTAL REVENUE	\$1.72 MILLION
---------------	----------------

WHO WE ARE

The Neighborhood Partnering Program provides opportunities for community and neighborhood organizations to affect public improvements by sharing in the costs of those efforts with the City of Austin.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM

EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS
BUILDING COMMUNITY



CITY OF AUSTIN
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM
CONNECTING YOU ALL AROUND AUSTIN

Have a vision for a project in your neighborhood? Take the first step!

Contact
Justin Golbabai, Neighborhood Partnering Program Manager
justin.golbabai@austintexas.gov
(512) 974-6439

Application Deadlines:
June 1st and October 1st

Find Us Online
www.facebook.com/neighborhoodpartnering
austintexas.gov/neighborhoodpartnering

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM

WHAT WE DO



• THE NEIGHBORHOOD COST-SHARING PROGRAM •

This program assists neighborhood groups in developing, resourcing, and executing small- to medium-sized improvement projects in the City's right of way or on City-owned property. Cost sharing can be achieved through cash contributions, in-kind contributions, or donated labor (sweat-equity).



• THE GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM •

This program will provide City matching funds that will enable applicants to meet cost sharing or matching requirements for external grant opportunities.



• THE ADOPT-A-MEDIAN PROGRAM •

This program provides an approval mechanism for community groups interested in adopting, beautifying and maintaining a median or other City right-of-way areas.



• THE PARKING BENEFIT PROJECT COORDINATION PROGRAM •

This program assists the associated neighborhood organization identify, scope, and coordinate local improvement projects for which Parking Benefit District revenue can be dedicated.

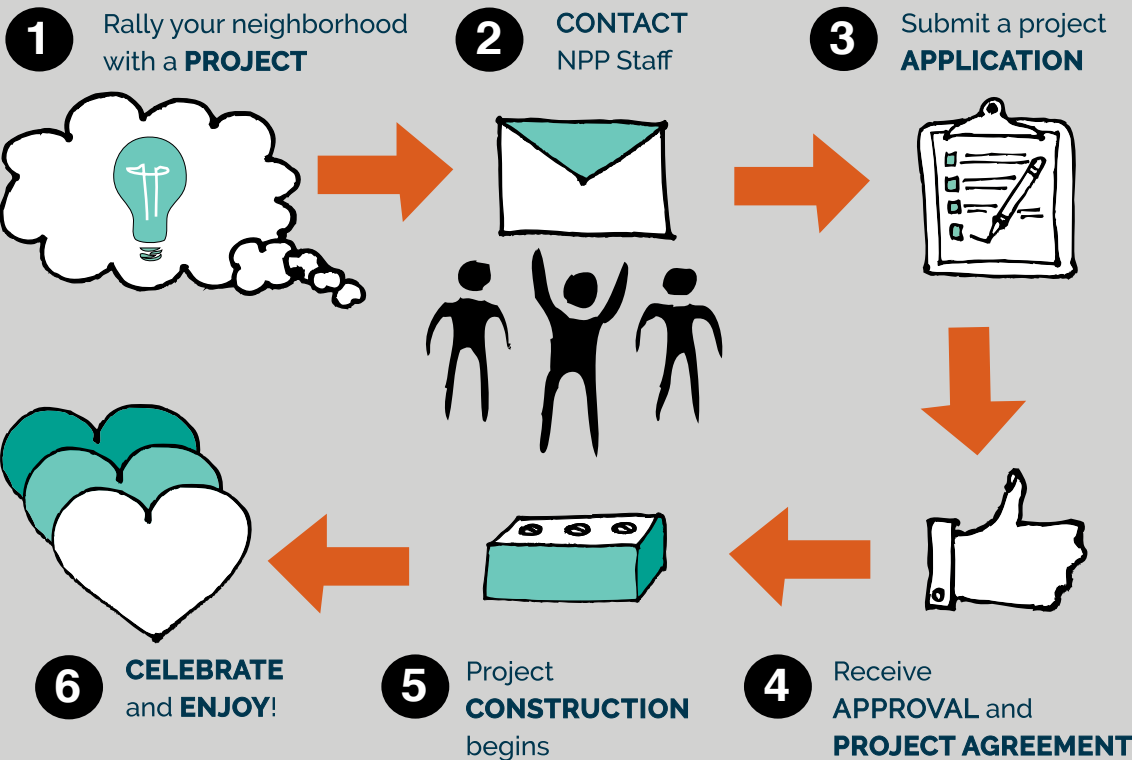
WHO CAN APPLY?

- Neighborhood or Homeowners Associations
- Neighborhood Plan Contact Teams
- Community Service Associations, Educational, Ethnic, Cultural, or Religious Organizations.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA?

- Proposed project is on City property or appropriate easements
- Project is submitted by a community group
- 60% of impacted stakeholders must approve of the project
- Community Group maintains the project for the life of the project (does not include concrete or asphalt-related work).

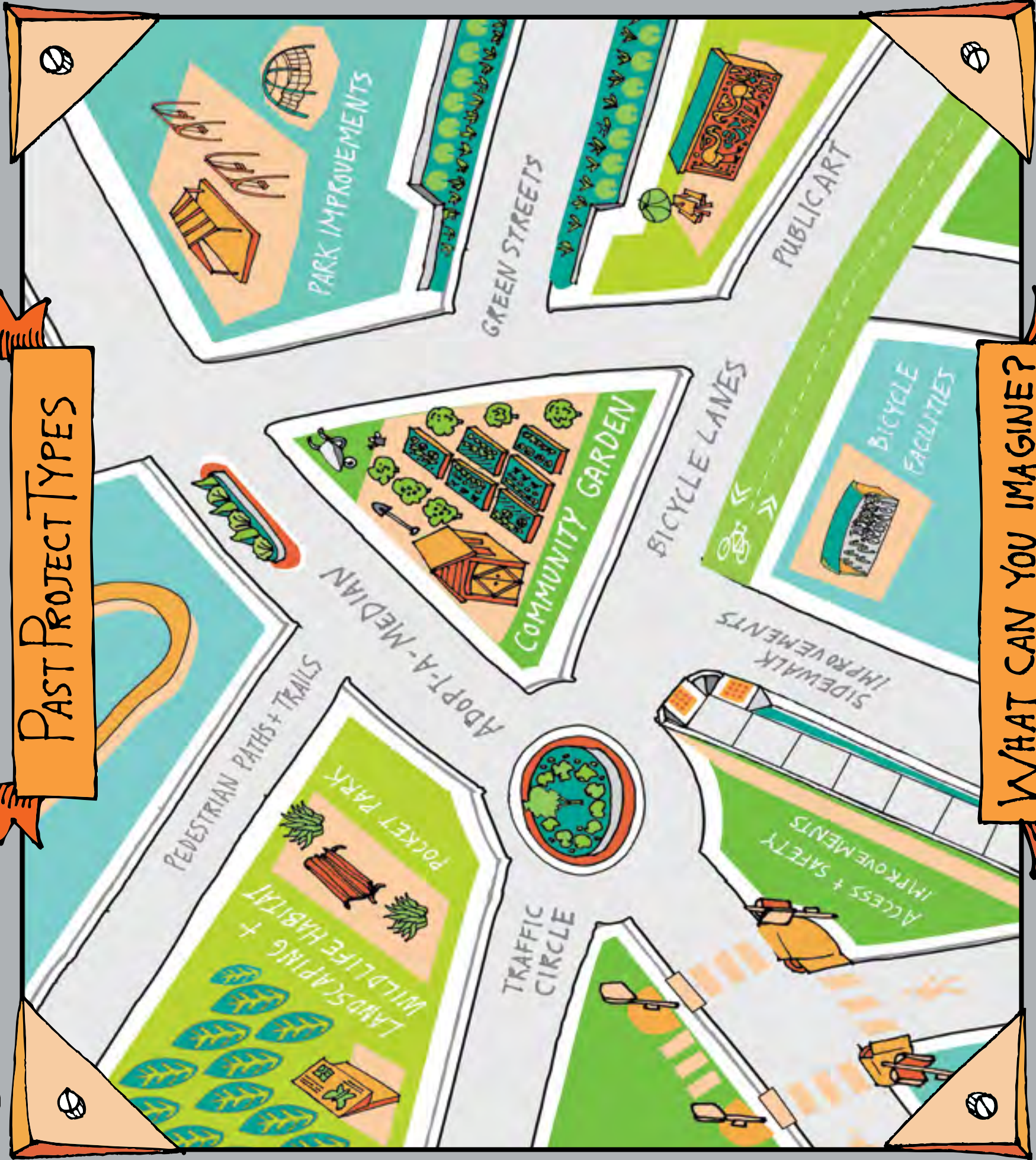
PROJECT LIFECYCLE



Every artist needs a canvas – a blank slate, full of potential for the artist to express their creativity. For the Neighborhood Partnering Program, City-owned property is the canvas, Public Works is the paintbrush, and our citizens are the artists!

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM

PAST PROJECT TYPES



WHAT CAN YOU IMAGINE?

REAL PROJECT EXAMPLES

BEFORE

AFTER

PATTERSON PARK MOSAIC



ST. ELMO RIGHT-OF-WAY



CHERRY CREEK COMMUNITY GARDEN



"The Cherry Creek Community Garden is a wonderful addition to our neighborhood and it's not just the gardeners who feel this way; it's the entire community. It's the pride of our neighborhood" ---Terry Southwell, Site Director, Cherry Creek Community Garden.



2016-2018

ACTION PLAN

DRAFT

updated 5/12

VISION  ZERO  

any traffic death is too many



DRAFT

Executive Summary

Vision Zero refers to a traffic safety concept that aims to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on roadways to zero. On November 20, 2014, the Austin City Council approved Resolution 20141120-103 calling for the City Manager to create a Vision Zero Task Force to study this policy and to produce a report, along with any recommendations, to the Council. This plan is a result of the Task Force's effort. Eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries will require long-term efforts. This plan articulates an ambitious two-year strategy to begin reducing traffic deaths as Austin works toward the goal of zero deaths and serious injuries by 2025. The actions in this plan should be evaluated and refined on an on-going basis.

The plan is underpinned by several key principles:

- Traffic deaths and injuries are a preventable, public health issue. Any traffic death is too many.
- People will make mistakes; the transportation system should be designed so those mistakes aren't fatal.

- Safety is the primary consideration in transportation decision-making.
- Traffic safety solutions must be addressed holistically, through:
 - Education and culture change,
 - Enforcement and prosecution, and
 - Land use, planning, and transportation engineering.

In a typical year, 64 people lose their lives on Austin's streets; for each person killed, eight more are seriously injured. Half of these deaths are people walking or riding motorcycle or bicycle, even though these modes only make up about 6.5 percent of all commuters. A larger proportion of minority groups and homeless individuals make up these numbers. In addition to the human loss, these injuries and fatal crashes cost Austinites more than \$500 million annually. The interplay of multiple factors is likely involved in most crashes, but the top contributing factors from crash reports of fatal or incapacitating



crashes from 2010 to 2014 have clear implications for traffic safety improvement needs. The most dangerous driving behaviors contributing to crashes are: speed, improper maneuvers, failure to yield, distraction, impairment, and failure to stop.

This plan builds upon ongoing safety efforts by the Austin Police Department, the Austin Transportation Department and other regional agencies. It recognizes that these enforcement and engineering efforts must be supported by reforms to the courts, service industry, land use regulation and mental health services.

To reduce crashes that result in deaths or serious injuries, the Vision Zero Task Force has identified critical path actions for 2016 through 2018, organized into five key themes:

EVALUATION: Collect, analyze, communicate and share data that documents fatal and incapacitating crashes and top contributing factors.

ENFORCEMENT: Strengthen the ability to focus enforcement on hotspot locations of crashes resulting in deaths or incapacitating injuries.

ENGINEERING: Bolster key initiatives for which Complete Street Design, Traffic Engineering, and Trans-

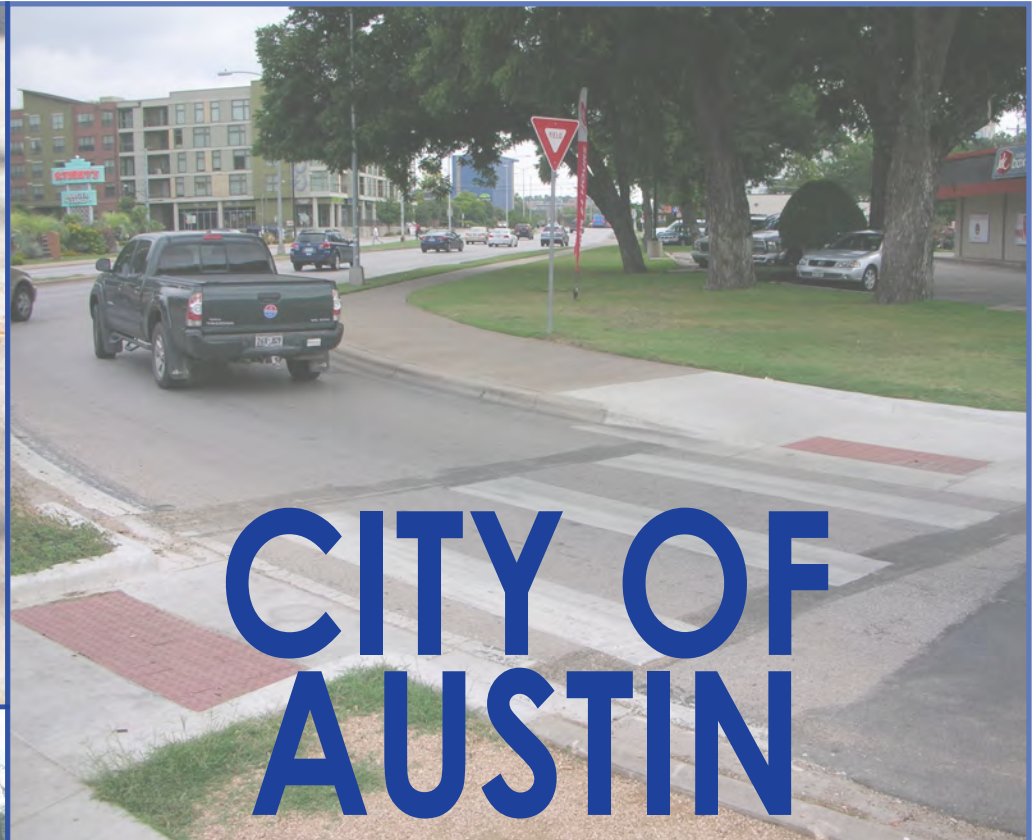
portation and Land Use Planning can prevent deadly or incapacitating collisions.

EDUCATION: Create a targeted public education campaign to raise awareness of the severity of the problem and solutions and integrate Vision Zero principles into existing educational initiatives.

POLICY: Identify and advocate for policies that will strengthen the ability to achieve Vision Zero.

Implementation of the Vision Zero Action Plan will be led by a Vision Zero Program and the Vision Zero Task Force. The City of Austin will staff and fund a program dedicated to improved transportation safety with the guidance and involvement of the Vision Zero Task Force. A planning-level cost estimate for all actions accompanies this plan in Appendix A. The City will report on progress through an annual report card that measures the community's progress towards achieving Vision Zero.

Austin joins several other U.S. cities in making this commitment including New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Boston, and San Antonio. By making a commitment to reduce deaths and serious injuries to zero by 2025, Austin will become a safer, more livable city for generations to come.



CITY OF AUSTIN

Sidewalk Master Plan / ADA Transition Plan Update

Prepared by
City of Austin Public Works Department
City of Austin Transportation Department
MWM DesignGroup
HDR

April 18, 2016

ADOPTION DRAFT



Section 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Austin 2016 Sidewalk Master Plan / ADA Transition Plan Update establishes asset management policies for sidewalks within City of Austin right-of-way. As of November 2015, the citywide sidewalk network includes 2,580 miles of absent (missing) and 2,400 miles of existing sidewalk.

GOALS

- Encourage walking as a viable mode of transportation, improve pedestrian safety, and enable people to walk to and from transit stops.
- Update the sidewalk portion of the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan and set forth policies that will improve mobility for people with disabilities.
- Help control air pollution and traffic congestion, and improve the quality of life in Austin, by including sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities as necessary and integral components of the transportation system.
- Provide an objective mechanism for the City's use in prioritizing new sidewalk construction and existing sidewalk repair and rehabilitation projects.
- Incorporate goals and policies from the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and updated Complete Streets policy.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW SIDEWALKS

The recommendations for the new sidewalk program in Austin are based on the guidance provided in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council in June 2012 and the Complete Streets Policy adopted in June 2014. Below are the the new sidewalk program targets recommended in Section 4 of the 2016 Sidewalk Master Plan Update.

Table 1-1: New Sidewalk Program		
Target	Fiscal Years 2018 - 2027	
	Implementation Schedule	Estimated Annual Budget
Address all very high and high priority sidewalks within ¼ mile of all identified schools, bus stops, and parks, including both sides of arterial and collector streets and one side of residential streets. (Approximately 390 miles)	39 miles/year	\$25 million per year

Below are other key recommendations for new sidewalks that are included in Section 4 of this update:

- **Develop a transparent system for working with Council District Representatives** to utilize their local knowledge and resources as one of the refining filters in selecting potential construction projects from the list of high priority sidewalk needs identified by the GIS prioritization process.
- **Ensure development adequately addresses sidewalks** and does not create new gaps by enacting key land development code updates recommended in Appendix I.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW SIDEWALKS (CONT'D)

- **Implement a sidewalk mitigation fee for new development** to address absent pedestrian infrastructure. In order to equitably address needs, the fee could be based on a combination of increased intensity of use and outstanding pedestrian infrastructure need in the area. Fees collected would be dedicated to improvements in the area consistent with current fee-in-lieu practice.
- **Implement Neighborhood Shared Streets pilot program** to evaluate alternative strategies for safe and cost effective pedestrian access.
- **Incorporate green infrastructure and pedestrian safety priorities** into sidewalk projects by removing unnecessary pavement and introducing rain gardens and shade trees wherever feasible and cost effective.
- **Identify partnering opportunities to implement projects** that support shared goals or overlapping priorities through collaboration and shared resources.

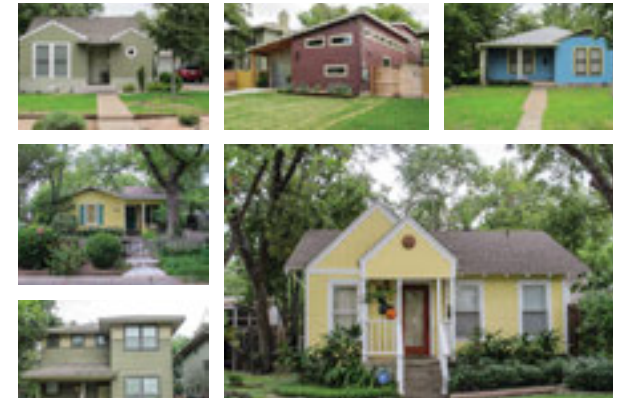
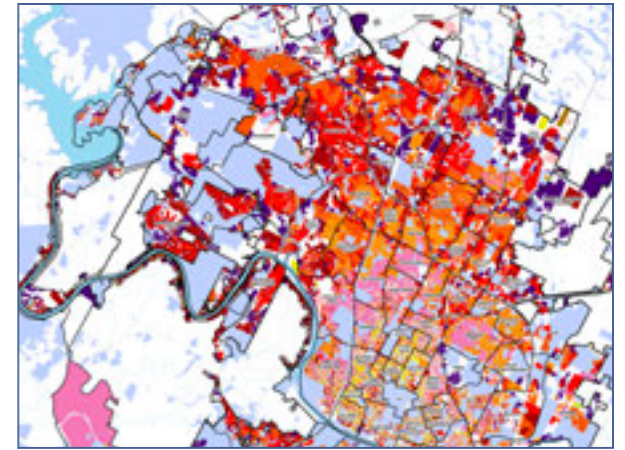
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXISTING SIDEWALKS

The existing sidewalk program in Austin is based on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law in 1990. Below are the existing sidewalk program targets recommended in Section 5 of the 2016 Sidewalk Master Plan Update.

Table 1-2: Existing Sidewalk Program		
Target	Implementation Schedule	Estimated Annual Budget
Achieve 95% functionality for very high and high priority sidewalks and Achieve 55% functionality for citywide sidewalk network	10 years	\$15 million per year

Below are other key recommendations for existing sidewalks that are included in Section 5 of this update.

- **Develop and implement public awareness and enforcement program** to address vegetative obstruction removal.
- **Provide stable and sufficient funding** for sustainable repair and rehabilitation of existing sidewalks.
- **Implement ongoing sidewalk condition assessment program** that assesses at least 10% of the existing network annually.
- **Revise City Code** to clarify the responsibility of property owners for maintenance of driveway approaches. (See Appendix I for suggested code revisions.)



AUSTIN, TEXAS LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE DIAGNOSIS

Public Draft: May 5, 2014

CODENEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE



1.1 CodeNEXT Initiative Background

About the Land Development Code (LDC) Update and this Report

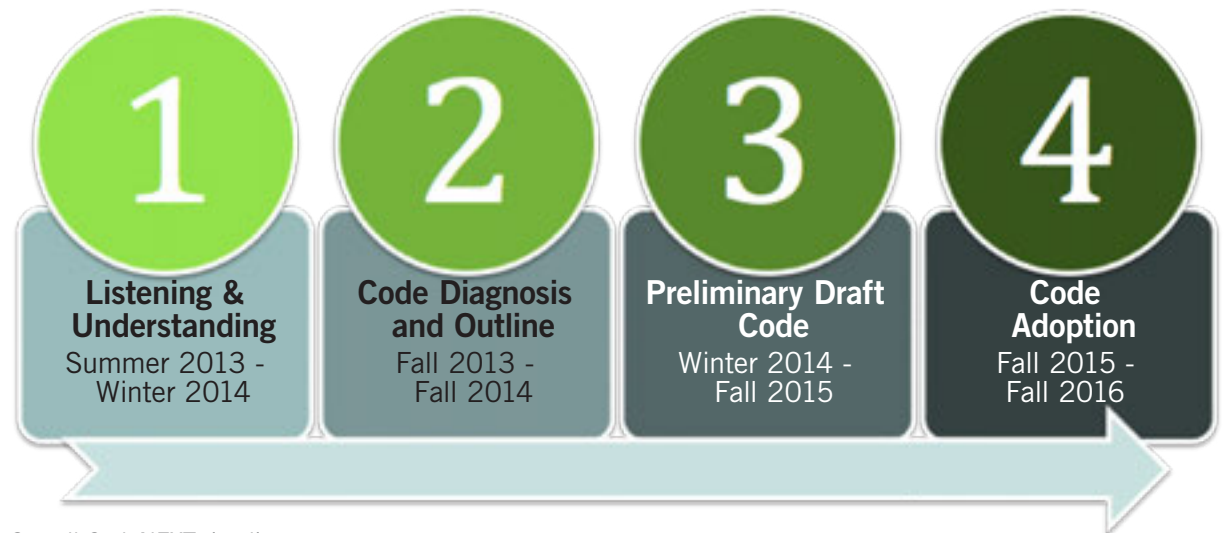
Austin is a creative, vibrant, and lively city. Austinites treasure unique neighborhoods and small businesses, celebrate diverse ideas and strive to protect the natural resources. Austinites aspire to be a community that is affordable and accessible to all and maintains the distinctive character and lifestyle that have made Austin a great place to live, work, and play.

Comprehensive Plan

The city's rapid growth has presented both opportunities and challenges to realizing the aspirations of Austinites. In 2009, Austinites began a big-picture conversation about how to best tackle these challenges and create a vision to help guide the future. This multiyear process led to the successful adoption of a new citywide comprehensive plan called the "Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan," which was adopted by the Austin City Council in June of 2012.

Imagine Austin lays out the citizens' vision for complete communities that respond to the pressures and opportunities of a rapidly growing modern city. In order to achieve the goals articulated in Imagine Austin, the city's Land Development Code (LDC)—the rules and processes that regulate where and what type of development may occur—must be updated. The existing code, written nearly 30 years ago, has been amended hundreds of times over the years, is too complex, and does not allow Austinites to create the city they want.

See Section "2.1 Imagine Austin" on page 16 for more details.



Overall CodeNEXT timeline

CodeNEXT Process

In 2013, the city engaged the help of both national and local experts to work with elected officials, staff, appointed representatives, and the community at large on how best to align the land use standards and regulations with the goals of Imagine Austin. From the beginning, this process—dubbed "CodeNEXT"—placed as much emphasis on listening to people as it did on exploring the technical dimensions of the code. Following is a description of the major products to be created during the CodeNEXT process.

Listening to the Community Report

The CodeNEXT team designed a unique approach that began with listening to the community. This initial project phase, called “Listening and Understanding,” created numerous ways for people throughout Austin to be in conversation with the CodeNEXT team and each other about issues that impact their everyday lives. These conversations explored what is working well, what needs to be improved in the places where they live, work, and play, and how the city’s Land Development Code (LDC) could be most effective as a framework for improving the quality of life.

In an effort to make CodeNEXT transparent and accessible, the report includes links to the documents containing the input collected during the process in the report’s addendum.

Since CodeNEXT is a multiyear process, this preliminary Listening to the Community Report does not represent an end of the conversation, but rather a recap of input gathered through early January 2014. The CodeNEXT team will continue to foster a robust conversation in Austin about how best to shape the Austin we imagine.

Read the Listening to the Community Report here:
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/CodeNEXT/CodeNEXT_L2C_Report-Email-Version-v4-8-14.pdf

Code Diagnosis

The Code Diagnosis, this report, focuses on summarizing major issues identified by the public, city staff, and the CodeNEXT team within the existing LDC. While the input and analysis of the document often drilled down to the specifics of particular regulations, this report steps back and presents the overarching issues within the current LDC.

This report defines the basis or need for revising the current LDC does not prescribe or recommend the direction for the new code.

In some cases, it also recommends topics to be discussed by the community to help guide the direction for the code. These can be considered for future community discussion, along with other topics from the Listening to the Community Report, Community Character Manual, and other community discussions.

Input to the diagnosis includes information gathered from stakeholders and staff during the listening phase of the project, as well as the consultant’s analysis of the text and structure of the existing code.

Findings from this report will be added to the list of considerations as the city and CodeNEXT team begin to formulate alternative approaches to rewriting and reorganizing the LDC.

Other Documents in the CodeNEXT Process

Community Character Manual

The Community Character Manual can be seen as a visual dictionary and atlas of the unique character of the built environment found in Austin. This manual presents both citywide elements and provides a glimpse of the character of the built environment within each neighborhood reporting area.

Alternative Approaches to the Code

This document will provide three approaches to the reorganization and rewriting of the LDC. The approaches could range from just reorganizing the current content of the existing code to rewriting large sections of the LDC. From this document, the selected approach and annotated outline will establish the general direction for revising the LDC. However, the content of specific regulations will not be changed.

Draft Code

Based on the approach chosen by City Council, city staff and the consultant team will work to reorganize and rewrite portions of the existing LDC. Three drafts of the code will be prepared for discussion with the public, the LDC Code Advisory Group, boards and commissions and City Council.

1.2 History and Current Structure of the LDC

History of Austin's Land Development Code

The first zoning code for the City of Austin was adopted in 1931, with major revisions written in 1967. The early code was a conventional Euclidean-style code, with uses isolated into specific districts. However, many districts were cumulative, so that uses from the more restrictive districts were allowed in less restrictive districts. For example, multifamily development was allowed in commercial districts, but commercial uses were not allowed in multifamily districts. The code also regulated development intensity separate from land uses, so that each use district could be combined with different site development regulations (known as height and area limitations).

The basis of the existing zoning structure was adopted in 1984 as Chapter 13-2A of the City Code. This code stratified uses into mostly distinct residential and non-residential districts and established specific site development regulations for each use district. It also introduced new performance concepts such as compatibility standards to protect single-family neighborhoods, traffic impact analyses to consider transportation impacts of land development, and impervious cover limitations to help reduce stormwater runoff. When the 1984 code was adopted, all properties within city limits were rezoned into new zoning districts.

Timeline of Major Amendments to the Austin Land Development Code Since 1984



Last major rewrite was completed for the 1984 Zoning Ordinance

1984 "Zoning Ordinance"
"View Corridor Overlay Zone Ordinance"
1985 "Hill Country Roadway Ordinance"
1986 "Comprehensive Watershed Ordinance"
"Parkland Dedication Ordinance"
"Waterfront Overlay District"

1987-88 "Unified Land Development Code"
1991 "Land Development Code Revision"
"Urban Watersheds Ordinance"
1993 "Save Our Springs Ordinance"
1999 "Central Urban Redevelopment (CURE) Combining District"
"Recodification of Land Development Code"
2001 "SMART Housing"
"Neighborhood Plan Combining District"
2003 "Austin-Travis County Subdivision Regulations"
2004 "University Neighborhood Overlay"
2005 "Transit-Oriented Development District"
2006 "Subchapter E Commercial Design Standards"
"Residential Design & Compatibility Standards" (i.e. 'McMansion Ordinance')

2007 "Redevelopment in Barton Springs Zone"
2008 "Planned Unit Developments"
2010 "Heritage Trees"
"Dock, Bulkheads, and Shoreline Access"
2011 "Open Space"
2012 "Flag Lots"
2013 "Downtown Parking"
"Short-Term Rental"
"Repeal of Project Duration"
"Watershed Protection Ordinance"
"Downtown Density Bonus Ordinance"
"Urban Farms"

Consolidation of Regulations into Unified Development Ordinance

In 1988, the zoning code, subdivision regulations, watershed regulations, and various other development-related ordinances were consolidated into the Land Development Code (Chapter 13), but few substantive changes were made in the regulations. This LDC did, however, establish a logical order for the development process that required approvals to be obtained in a specific sequence.

Land Development Code Revision

A recodification of the LDC to Chapter 25 was made in 1999 in order to reorganize certain sections and simplify the language. Although intended to be a non-substantive rewrite, changes in the language have resulted in new interpretations of some provisions of the LDC.

Other Major Code Amendments

From approximately 1985 - 1991 Austin adopted a series of development regulations to protect and preserve the environmental character of the city and surrounding area. These included the Hill Country Roadway Ordinance to protect and preserve the scenic and environmental qualities along certain roadways on the western edge of Austin; the Comprehensive Watersheds Ordinance, which combined formerly disparate watershed regulations into a single ordinance; the Waterfront Overlay District, which defined land development regulations for development along the Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake) to preserve the unique quality of this river corridor; the Urban Watersheds

Ordinance to balance the need for protection of urban creeks with the different and more urban context of much of central Austin; and the Save Our Springs Ordinance, which defined strict environmental regulations to protect the Edwards Aquifer and Barton Springs.

From 1999 to 2005 Austin adopted a series of amendments to manage redevelopment and infill, and encourage affordable housing. These included the CURE Combining District, which provided flexibility in development regulations for Downtown and nearby corridors; SMART Housing, which established criteria and incentives for affordable housing; the Neighborhood Plan Combining District, which provides flexibility in establishing development regulations for Neighborhood Plans; the University Neighborhood Overlay, which allowed additional density to the west of the University of Texas in exchange for certain community benefits; and the Transit-Oriented Development District, which was designed to encourage compact, mixed-use development near transit stations.

Austin-Travis County Subdivision Regulations

In 2003 a single set of subdivision regulations, known as Title 30, was adopted to govern subdivisions within five miles of the city limits in Travis County where the city and the County previously had overlapping jurisdiction.

Subchapter E: Commercial Design Standards and Mixed-Use

In 2006, Subchapter E of the LDC was approved to improve the city's standards for commercial and mixed

use development. This included standards for building placement, sidewalk and streetscape improvements, street connectivity, building design standards and the Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) provisions. While Subchapter E provided a necessary focus on the quality of new development it also suffers from several challenges. These include applying uniform standards to large areas of the city without consideration of context, lighting provisions that are both overly prescriptive and inadequate, a formatting and numbering system that can be challenging to use, and lack of flexibility in building design standards.

Ongoing Amendments

Since 2007 the Land Development Code has been amended frequently to accommodate both minor and very significant changes. Major amendments since 2007 include the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards intended to address scale and massing relationships between older and newer residential units, the rewriting of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance, the Heritage Tree ordinance which was designed to add protection for the largest trees in the community, the Watershed Protection ordinance, a major rewrite of the city's Watershed regulations, and the Downtown Density Bonus ordinance which established the guidelines for approval of density bonuses in Downtown Austin.

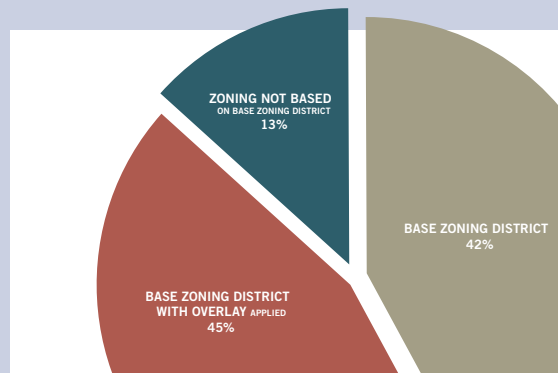
1.3 Summary of Key Findings

Top Ten Issues for Consideration

Austin's current Land Development Code is an extremely detailed, dense, and complicated document created over the last 30 years. The work of identifying specific, detailed solutions to problems identified with the LDC will occur during the approximately 2 year long process of creating a Preliminary and Final Draft Code. This section highlights the top ten issues identified by the consultant team, but it does not propose solutions but rather identifies issues that, based on the consultant team's experience, are contributing to concerns with the current development review process or could hinder achieving the goals of Imagine Austin.

The most visible and critical issue in the analysis of the city's regulations is that the code structure and organization is overly complicated, not well coordinated, and does not meet modern-day best practices in code writing layout. A more in-depth analysis demonstrates that the 33 base zoning districts, which are the foundation of the overall system, have been ineffective in creating a high-quality, compatible built environment in the City of Austin, especially as development pressures have grown and the demand for walkable urban living has increased. This is illustrated by the fact that only a little over 42% of the entire city is regulated simply with the base zoning districts.

The ineffective base zoning districts have led to the creation of layer upon layer of supplemental regulations, in the Combining Districts, Compatibility Standards, and Subchapters E and F to name the primary new layers, to try to make this system more effective. This complexity, in combination with the length of the process



1

Ineffective Base Zoning Districts

Austin's base zoning districts are ineffective because they apply the same development regulations to vastly different types of places.



3

Complicated "Opt-in, Opt-out" System

The approach of applying regulations on a pick-and-choose basis has resulted in unpredictable development and has complicated the process of understanding what can be built.

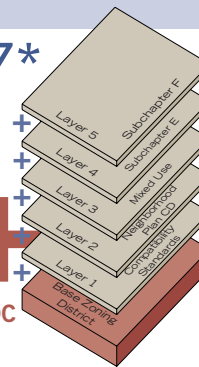
$$33 \times 19 = 627^*$$

Base Zoning Districts Combining Districts Potential Combinations

400+

Combinations Found in the LDC

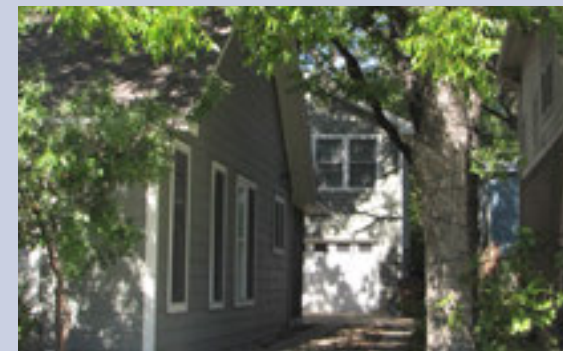
* Not all overlays can be applied to all base zoning districts.



2

Competing Layers of Regulations

Rather than address the ineffectiveness of the base zoning districts, 30-years worth of additional layers of regulation have been added to the LDC, making it so convoluted that it is virtually unusable.



4

Lack of Household Affordability and Choice

Austin's current efforts at meeting the demands of household affordability are not keeping pace with the growing need.



5

Auto-Centric Code

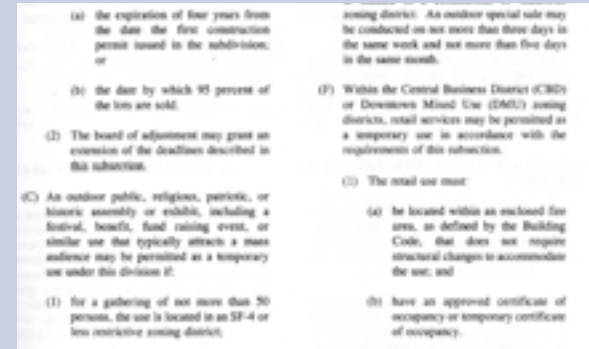
The LDC is centered around the automobile and is compromising the character of Austin's communities and not achieving the goals of Imagine Austin.



6

LDC Not Always In Line with Imagine Austin

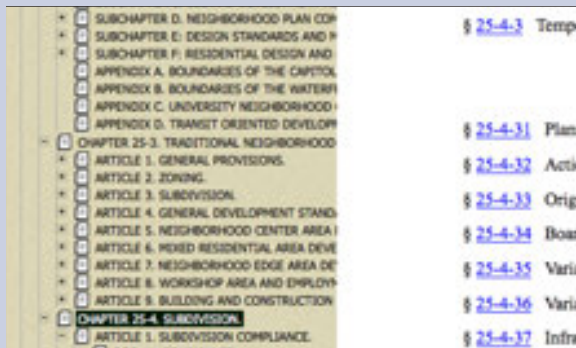
The current Land Development Code does not proactively implement Imagine Austin and in some cases hinders realization of the plan.



7

Lack of Usability and Clarity

The structure, layout and inconsistent terminology make the code unclear and difficult to use.



8

Ineffective Digital Code

A clunky interface, lack of graphics, and slow operating system make Austin's digital code hard to understand and use.



9

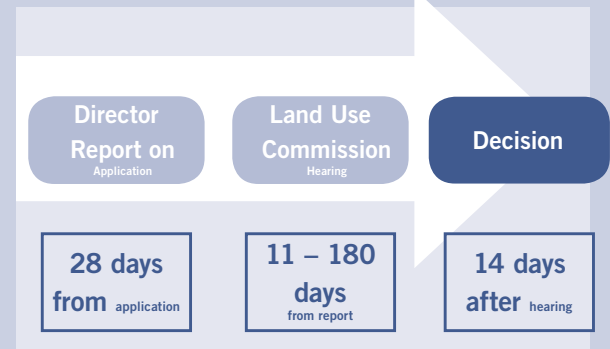
Code Changes Adversely Affect Department Organization

The current complexity of the Land Development Code has an adverse effect on the organizational structure of the Planning and Development Review department.

10

Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedures

A lack of clarity and consistency in decision-making, interpretation, and review of the code, as well as missing or incomplete code administration information, make for a lengthy and unpredictable review process.



and some of the specific regulations, has hindered small-scale, incremental adaptive-reuse projects and the incubation of local small businesses. In addition, none of the base zoning districts allow or encourage diverse, small-footprint Missing Middle housing types, which are necessary for Austin to meet its affordability goals. (See *Sidebar “What is the Missing Middle?” on page 59*.) This ultimately has led to a development review and entitlement process that is highly complicated.

Listed below are the top ten issues identified in the code diagnosis.

1 Ineffective Base Zoning Districts

Austin has 33 base zoning districts, which is comparable to cities of similar size; however, with 19 additional combining districts and the different possible variations, Austin has over 400 possible combinations of various base zoning districts. Only 42% of the entire city is regulated simply by the original base zoning districts without any sort of overlay or combining district. Both of these are clear signs that the existing base zoning districts are not addressing desires of the neighborhoods for harmonious development, nor are they responding to the current and growing demand for infill and redevelopment in the City of Austin.

See Section “3.1 Ineffective Base Zoning Districts” on page 36 for more details.

2 Competing Layers of Regulations

In order to address the deficiencies of the base zoning districts, new standards, including Combining Districts, Compatibility Standards, Vertical Mixed Use, new procedures, and land-use regulations have continuously been added since the last code update in 1984 and have not been coordinated very well with existing content and document structure. This has created a Land Development Code with so many layers of regulations it is very difficult to understand and administer. That being said, each of these layers has good intent and generally good content and/or regulations. Ultimately, the document and these different layers could be coordinated, consolidated, and restructured.

See Section “3.2 Competing Layers of Regulations” on page 50 for more details.

3 Complicated “Opt-in, Opt-out” System

The idea of making sure that regulations are relevant for a specific neighborhood is an appropriate consideration. However the a-la-carte system used in Austin of hand-picking individual pieces of the zoning code has overcomplicated the system from an administration and general usability standpoint.

See Section “3.3 Complicated “Opt-in, Opt-out” System” on page 52 for more details.

4 Lack of Household Affordability and Choice

The City of Austin faces a significant challenge when tackling the well-documented growing demand for housing affordable to a large segment of its residents. Though the city and its private and nonprofit partners have made considerable progress on a number of fronts, the LDC could better assist in reducing costs and enabling the creation and preservation of more quality affordable housing units. The current regulations and processes could be revised to help lower development costs, encourage density in appropriate locations, and promote the development of affordable housing in more neighborhoods.

See Section “3.4 Lack of Household Affordability and Choice” on page 54 for more details.

5 Auto-Centric Code

The LDC is centered around the automobile and is compromising the character of Austin's communities and not achieving the goals of Imagine Austin.

There are three primary issues related to Austin's off-street parking regulations, mostly found in Chapters 25-5 Site Plans and 25-6 Transportation:

1. High parking requirements are prohibiting compatible, small-scale infill development in appropriate places;
2. Large amounts of off-street parking are beginning to chip away at, and compromise the character of, the communities throughout the city; and
3. The regulations are encouraging the creation of auto-dependent density.

See Section "3.5 Auto-Centric Code" on page 62 for more details.

6 LDC Not Always In Line with Imagine Austin

Imagine Austin established a detailed Vision for Austin 30 years in the future and defined 8 Priority Programs to provide a structure and direction for implementation of the plan.

Many of these Priority Programs are directly linked to the Land Development Code, and others are, at a minimum, indirectly affected by the code. A key finding of this report is that the current Land Development Code does not proactively implement

Imagine Austin and in some cases hinders realization of the plan. The following sections provide more detail on the Priority Programs most directly affected by the Land Development Code and problems with the current code.

See Section "3.6 LDC Not Always In Line with Imagine Austin" on page 64 for more details.

7 Lack of Usability and Clarity

As is true with any zoning code of similar age, the many years of additions of new regulations and procedures has made the LDC and supporting documents inconsistent, hard to understand, and extremely difficult to use. The primary issues are:

1. Inconsistent hierarchy, structure, and location of information;
2. Non-user-friendly and out-of-date layout, including a lack of graphics; and
3. Inconsistent use of terminology and conflicting information.

See Section "4.1 Lack of Usability and Clarity" on page 72 for more details.

8 Ineffective Digital Code

An effective online digital zoning code can be a tool to improve the usability and clarity of a land development code. Austin's online code, like those of many other cities across the country, is outdated and unrefined, and actually makes the LDC harder to understand and use. The issues with the digital code range from big-picture issues related to format

and user interface, to small issues like layout, basic page format, and lack of clarity for the user.

Recently, the city has signed a contract to switch from the current host service provider. The switch provides opportunities for some of the issues raised in this Section to be addressed.

See Section "4.2 Ineffective Digital Code" on page 76 for more details.

9 Code Changes Adversely Affect Department Organization

Planning and Development Review's (PDR) organizational structure and the physical arrangement of the workspace at One Texas Center were shaped by incremental change over a fairly long period of time. Customers at Austin's Development Assistance Center seek development permits, not protracted review processes. However, the LDC's multilayered system lacks a "by-right" discipline and Austin's frequent, customized code amendments often contribute to and compound administrative complexity. The LDC's expanding complexity over the years combined with Austin's booming development activity have exponentially increased demands on PDR and other city department's involved in the development review process in terms of organizational structure, position levels (and required skills), workspace efficiency, and ability to effectively implement adopted plans. Moreover, most departments work autonomously and focus on individual issues and requirements. Without a centralized decision-maker to sort through conflicting priorities, the system lacks clear coordination and efficiency.

See Section "5.1 Code Changes Adversely Affected Department Organization" on page 80 for more details.

10 Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedures

Stakeholders and staff identified the length of time it takes to obtain project approvals and the lack of predictability in the entitlement process as key issues with the existing LDC. For development regulations to be most effective, the review process must be transparent and efficient. To achieve transparency and efficiency, the entitlement process should be easy to navigate, application requirements should be clear, permit cycle times should be consistent, and the process should be streamlined to the extent possible.

A lengthy and unpredictable review process is not only the result of complicated procedures, but also the outcome of complex development standards themselves. An indication of an inefficient and outdated regulatory system in the city is the use of conditional overlays and the number of applications requesting a rezone. In fiscal year 2013, the City Council approved 191 rezoning applications prior to subdivision or site plan approval.

See Section "5.2 Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedures" on page 84 for more details.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the context for this code diagnosis report, its purpose, and the top findings identified in the report. The following chapters provide a more thorough overview of these top findings and others found during the code diagnosis phase.



The Next Austin: Manage our growth, keep our character

Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

DRAFT



CODENEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE

The physical form of Austin not only shapes how the city functions, it also is an expression of our city's values and the experience people have living here. The Land Development Code reflects a grand balancing of our public values – livability, affordability, environmental protection, mobility, thriving economy, and preservation versus change.

Introduction

Imagine Austin, Austin’s Comprehensive Plan, articulates a broad vision for our city. It calls for economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods, interconnected development patterns that promote transportation choices, and protection for our natural resources. To realize the vision in Imagine Austin, we must revise our rules for development, known as the Land Development Code (LDC). The process of revising the LDC is called CodeNEXT. During the coming months, the CodeNEXT team will release a series of Code Prescriptions, which will preview how the new LDC will help implement Imagine Austin. The Prescriptions will focus on four topics:

- Natural and Built Environment
- Household Affordability
- Mobility
- Fiscal Health

This Code Prescription focuses on the Natural and Built Environment—the physical form and character of our city. The physical form of Austin not only shapes how the city functions, it also is an expression of our city’s values and the experience people have living here. For example:

- Barton Springs: Austin is fortunate to have this incredible natural feature right in the middle of the city. Through the generosity of individuals, and through the hard work of citizens and elected officials, we have protected

it against multiple threats. The Springs not only plays a large role in the life of the city; it also stands as a beacon of our values.

- Road Networks: Some areas of the city were built with a web of inter-connected roadways that allow great flexibility of route and mode to move around the city. Other areas were developed in isolated “pods” that provide some tranquility but require getting on busy and congested arterials to move outside the neighborhood. These choices dramatically shape how we live and move around the city.

Based on the goals of Imagine Austin and what we have learned from more than three years of code-specific outreach and work, this Prescription includes:

1. Treating water like a precious resource. Austin needs to be strategic about how we treat rainwater, adopting a conservation mindset.
2. Addressing flooding through a variety of active and passive technologies.
3. Finding better ways to integrate nature into the city.
4. Increasing road, sidewalk, and trail connectivity, giving people more transportation options.
5. Allowing for a diversity of lot sizes and building types, increasing the opportunity for affordability in residential and commercial development.

6. Encouraging redevelopment and infill, which better utilizes existing infrastructure and fosters community through increased connectivity and proximity.
7. Reducing sprawl in greenfield development with requirements for connectivity and tools that respect the natural environment, such as conservation subdivisions.

Ultimately, the Land Development Code reflects a grand balancing of our public values – livability, affordability, environmental protection, mobility, and preservation versus change. CodeNEXT has benefitted from valuable community engagement for more than three years, and these Code Prescriptions represent a proposal for how the new code can strike a balance that achieves our city’s vision for itself as expressed in Imagine Austin.





Developing Complete Communities for all Austinites:

Household Affordability Code Prescription



CODENEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE

Affordability affects everyone directly or indirectly including seniors, those on a fixed income or in the low and middle income brackets, musicians and artists, service workers, and families with children. A revised Land Development Code can provide flexibility to build more affordable housing options and reduce regulatory barriers so more resources can go toward providing housing that is affordable to more people.

What is a code prescription?

CodeNEXT is the process of aligning Austin's land use standards and regulations (the Land Development Code, or LDC) with "Imagine Austin," the city's comprehensive plan. CodeNEXT progressed through several phases during 2013 and 2014:

- Listening and Understanding: "Listening to the Community Report" and "Community Character Manual."
- Diagnosis: "Land Development Code Diagnosis."

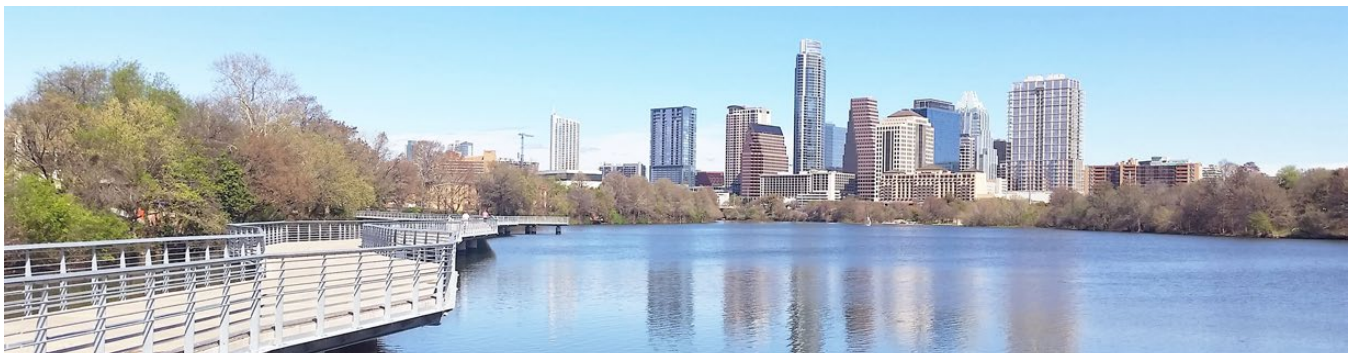
The City of Austin's CodeNEXT team, which includes staff from multiple departments and consultants, is busy drafting and refining code elements. Virtually the entire LDC will be re-written or revised, including chapters relating to requirements and procedures, zoning, subdivision, site plan, transportation, drainage, environment, and others. The draft code will be released for public review and comment in January 2017. After an extensive review and comment period, the draft code will be revised in accordance with the feedback received, and delivered for City Council potential adoption. Once the code is adopted, the city will adopt a new Zoning Map to implement the zoning elements of the code.

During 2016 – while the CodeNEXT team is drafting and reviewing code – the project team will issue and organize community conversations and feedback on some of the most challenging and important topics that the code will address:

- Natural and Built Environment.
- Household Affordability.
- Mobility.
- Fiscal Health.

This is being accomplished through four "Code Prescription" papers. These Code Prescriptions represent a preview of the specific direction being taken in the new code as well as "conversation starters" to gather community feedback on whether these Prescriptions accurately reflect community values expressed in Imagine Austin. While the Code Prescription papers will not be revised based on feedback received, the feedback will be used to shape the new code. Feedback can be provided several ways including:

- Through your participation in the work of the Council-appointed Code Advisory Group.
- By providing feedback directly at SpeakUp Austin.
- By joining a CodeWalk or a Reddit/AMA (Ask Me Anything).
- Additional information about all of means to get involved can be found at the project website: www.austintexas.gov/codenext.



Executive Summary

Household affordability is a growing concern to more and more Austinites. This code prescription discusses the affordability challenges Austinites face in housing and transportation costs as well as commercial space for small businesses, cultural organizations, and venues. As CodeNEXT is focused on revising the land development code, this prescription identifies needed changes to Austin's Land Development Code that can help promote affordability. It must be noted that many other actions outside of land development regulations are needed in order to comprehensively address our affordability challenge. Thus, CodeNEXT alone cannot resolve all of Austin's affordability problems.

In order to make the necessary regulatory changes, tradeoffs will need to be made. The tradeoffs identified in the prescription are recommended because they are seen as beneficial to the community in light of best practices, best available information, and alignment with the goals of Imagine Austin. These tradeoffs include:

1. How might we increase housing supply and diversity to increase affordability while preserving what is unique and special about Austin?

In order to achieve a diversity of price points to accommodate a wider range of Austinites, a diversity of building types and unit sizes are needed. Concerns about development issues including the changing built environment, parking and traffic patterns, and exacerbated flooding can be mitigated through built form and design; examples include promoting more Missing Middle housing options near mass transit and bike facilities, and through improved environmental regulations. Missing Middle readily fits into neighborhoods and can add to the character as seen in neighborhoods like Bouldin, Clarksville, and Hyde Park when calibrated to respect the existing scale and proportion of existing housing stock. Missing Middle housing can be developed to provide a price point that is more affordable than single-family units.

Increasing the supply of housing where appropriate could increase the amount and diversity of available housing, which could then slow Austin's increasing housing prices. Form-based standards can help address the concerns about the size and scale of a building while applying more permissive parking and density standards near mobility infrastructure such as transit stops. Trading proximity to transit for car ownership can increase affordability. The prescriptions focus on:

- Refining and expanding the application Density Bonus programs.
- Promoting housing diversity in targeted areas such as Imagine Austin Activity Centers and Corridors.
- Providing more flexible development standards to promote housing diversity.
- Simplifying the permitting process.

2. How might we promote mobility choices to ensure affordability while enhancing and maintaining neighborhood character?

- Having access to various transportation options (transit, walking, biking) provides opportunities for people to reduce household costs associated with owning a vehicle. Placing more and diverse housing near transit, safe and consistent sidewalks, bike lanes, retail, and offices allows more people to consider riding a bike, walking, or taking transit to their daily destinations. Adding density and diversity can cause concern about large development near single-family neighborhoods, additional traffic, and parking problems. The form-based standards will ensure appropriate building scale and compatible structures. Prescriptions include:
- Integrating transit-oriented development standards into form-based code standards and applying the standards near high-capacity transit stations.

- Development standards into form-based code standards that support transportation choices such as local transit, bike infrastructure and walking.
- Reducing parking minimums in areas targeted for compact development.

3. How might we have an efficient development review process while ensuring development meets all code requirements?

A lengthy process with complex regulations does not guarantee better development results for Austin. A more clear, simple, predictable, and efficient administrative process for the code will allow for greater certainty in development, and a faster determination on whether a project is approved or rejected. This review process can be more efficient and still allow a public voice. It will enable and enhance enforceability of the code, and contribute to reduced regulatory costs, which could be passed to the owner or renter. Prescriptions include revising the organization of the Land Development Code and eliminating conflicting code prescriptions.

4. How might we create affordability while supporting environmental regulations?

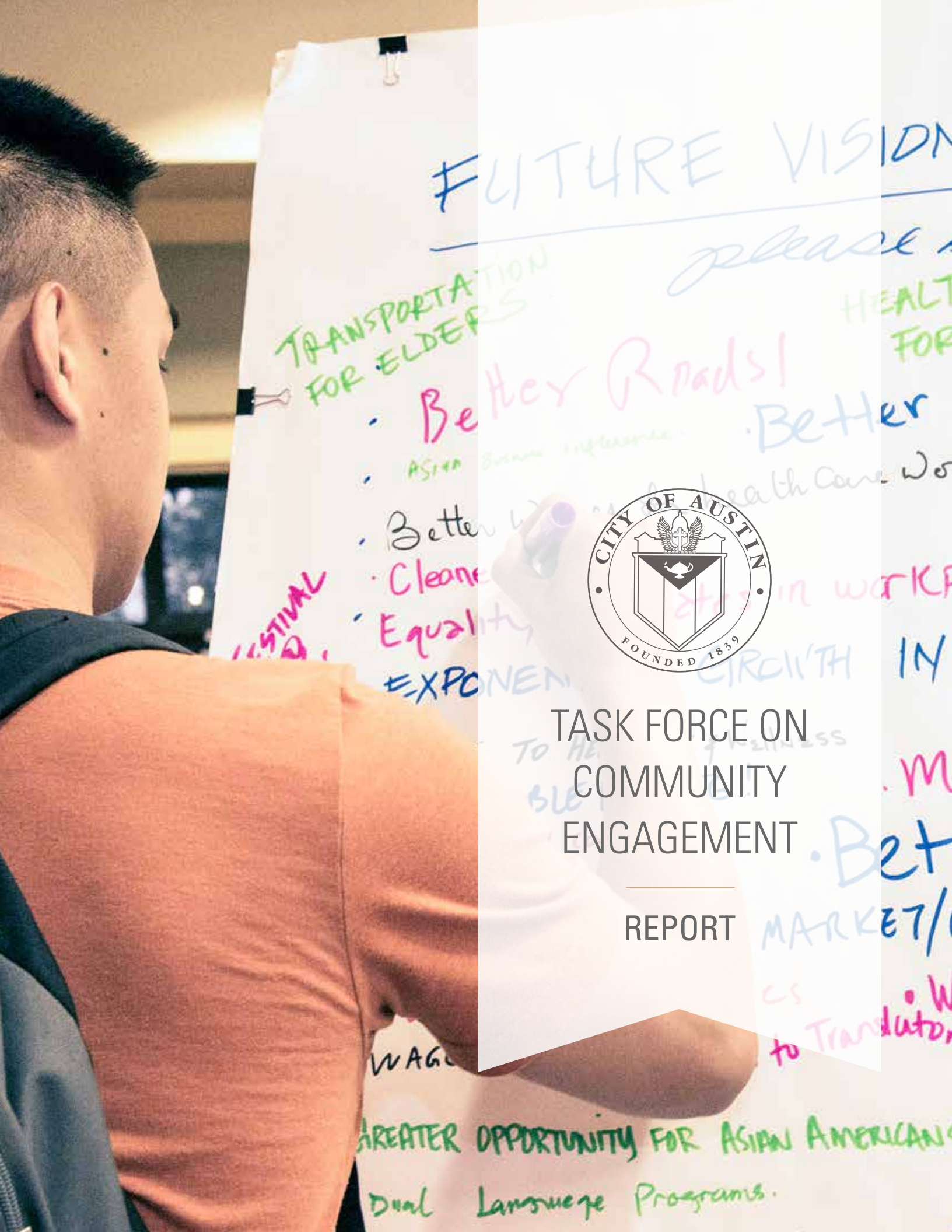
Public health and safety is essential to the City of Austin. Ensuring that Austinites are safe and comfortable is of utmost importance. In areas that have known hazards such as flooding, protecting public health and safety is the City's top priority. The same is true for those parts of Austin that have known critical environmental features such as aquifer recharge zones. Given these constraints, our community discussion centers on how to strike a balance with other public benefits such as affordable, attainable housing and commercial space. Prescriptions include maintaining the environmental regulations as identified in the Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription.

5. How might we promote affordable housing, and venues for small business and cultural arts while supporting the character of our existing neighborhoods?

Incentivizing more affordable housing and commercial space will help retain and attract musicians, artists, and small business. There will be concerns by some Austinites about providing the supply and diversity of development needed to provide opportunities for affordability, but there are regulatory changes that can help address these concerns. Failing to address the regulatory costs of development could cause a loss of not only people such as musicians, artists and service workers, but also of places we gather such as small business and cultural venues. Prescriptions include:

- Allowing for retail and commercial uses by right, including culture and creative uses, in areas where form-based zones have been applied.
- Revising the Density Bonus Program in targeted areas by adding preservation of an existing creative venue or business as a Community Benefit.
- Expand the opportunity for live/work units in form-based code districts.





TASK FORCE ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Austin moved into its new era of 10-1 district representation at City Hall, members of the public, community leaders, candidates, and eventually the newly elected City Council identified both unmet needs and new opportunities to improve Austin's community engagement. At its first meeting in January 2015, the new Council created by resolution the Task Force on Community Engagement. Over the next few months, the scope of the Task Force was further refined and structured and appointments were made by each Council office and the Mayor's office.

The Task Force formally began its work in July 2015 and, assisted by City staff support from the Communications and Public Information Office and a team of facilitators, met through March 2016 to develop the findings and recommendations presented in this report. This work proceeded through four stages:

1. Understanding and defining key elements of effective community engagement the Task Force thought should shape its recommendations for Austin.
2. Conducting original research and gathering input from the public, key external community stakeholders, and internal City stakeholders, using a variety of methods including surveys, focus groups, interviews, Conversation Corps sessions and direct testimony to the (public) meetings of the Task Force.
3. Using its key elements and the input gathered, developing a needs assessment that included five key themes.
4. Making specific recommendations for programs, policies, practices and strategies that could address the identified themes.

All decisions made by the Task Force, both with respect to process and work planning and regarding the specific needs and recommendations, were made by consensus. Throughout this work, the Task Force was informed both by current efforts going on within the City as an organization as well as by promising practices identified from other communities. Information resources and input were shared electronically via a publicly accessible worksharing platform (Bloomfire) so that members of the Task Force could continue their work between biweekly meetings. All told, members of the Task Force devoted more than 500 hours collectively to the effort.

The Task Force identified the purpose of quality public engagement to offer opportunities for all voices to be heard and respected, which leads to better representation of the community, which in turn results in better decisions and policies.

Elements identified by the Task Force to support this purpose included various principles under the following categories:

- Empowered communities
- Time-realistic tools
- Rich two-way methods
- Equity and proportionality
- Mutual trust
- Clear, accessible information
- Quality of listening, impact, accountability
- Appropriate resources (staffing, funding, etc.)
- Cultural relevance

These elements were used to help analyze input received from the community as a whole and from specific stakeholder groups identified by the Task Force for additional consideration. This information included survey responses, focus groups and interviews, and other input from more than 1,000 residents, community and civic leaders, and internal City stakeholders. The Task Force identified several stakeholder groups around which to organize its own workgroups and the resulting analysis, including:

- Neighbors and neighborhoods
- Businesses
- Civic groups and community volunteers
- Underrepresented populations
- City boards and commissions
- City departments (as well as City Council offices).

Processing this information, reviewing promising practices from other communities (shared with the Task Force throughout its work), and deliberating as a group allowed the Task Force to arrive at the five key themes in its needs assessment, around which the recommendations here were developed:

Theme 1:	Make information clear, relevant and easily accessible.
Theme 2:	Make it easier for people to give input in ways that are convenient, accessible and appropriate for them.
Theme 3:	Explain how input will be used and show how that input has an impact on the decisions made.
Theme 4:	Ensure that everyone who cares about an issue or is impacted has the opportunity to engage.
Theme 5:	Ensure that City staff has the support, training, tools and resources to do engagement well.

The final weeks of work for the Task Force involved bringing to the surface specific ideas that emerged from its research and analysis as practices that the City could pursue to achieve progress toward meeting these needs. These recommendations are presented here both in at-a-glance format, with identified fiscal implications and estimated timeframes, as well as in depth, with notes provided for each that help flesh out the context of the Task Force's discussions and deliberations.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

As one of its final actions, the Task Force asked each member to identify the three recommendations that he or she felt were the most important for the City to consider to most fully attain the group's vision for successful civic engagement and to best respond to the input received from the community. In many cases, these are efforts that the Task Force understands are either under way now or are already priorities for the City in the near term, but this measure of importance also includes recommendations that will take years to fully bring to realization if the City chooses to pursue them at all. Out of the 27 recommendations adopted by consensus by the Task Force, ten rose to the status of priority recommendations and are presented (in rank order) below:

Implement a website redesign.	Recommendation 1A
Invest in creating capacity and trust with under-represented communities.	Recommendation 4A
Provide ongoing training to public-facing city staff who engage with the public so they can provide useful feedback and capture public input.	Recommendation 5A
Sufficiently fund, prioritize, and implement during FY2017 online agenda commenting system for community members to give input to Council, Commissions, Boards, and Task Forces on city issues.	Recommendation 2F
When the City designs an engagement opportunity, provide feedback in a timely manner to participants on what was heard and how the input is being used to inform future decisions. Also make this information easily available to the general public.	Recommendation 3A
Sufficiently fund, prioritize and implement during FY2017 an online engagement platform that has specific capabilities (as listed in recommendation).	Recommendation 2G
Publish content in a standardized machine-readable format to a data portal in real time.	Recommendation 1B
Implement a content-creation policy that helps ensure: (1) clear communication in everyday language across all media types; (2) improved clarity of legal public notices regarding land use cases; (3) creation of explanatory pieces about complex topics being discussed at Council meetings.	Recommendation 1F
Systematically work to engage and partner with community based organizations that have existing community relationships, community trust and community engagement expertise.	Recommendation 2C
City Council, Boards, and Commissions should follow a consistent, structured, transparent process from proposal to decision that allows the public to track online the progress and status of items.	Recommendation 4C



Flood Mitigation Task Force:

Final Report to Austin City Council

May 16, 2016



I. Executive Summary

The Flood Mitigation Task Force was created by the Austin City Council by Resolution 20150604-044 on June 4, 2015. Resolution 20150604-044 directed the Task Force to review existing flood mitigation and preparedness strategies, including buyouts and variances; project and operational financing; affordability; planning and regulations; stakeholder collaboration; citizen communication; and to then make recommendations for new strategies and policies. The resolution also directed the Task Force to pay specific attention to Upper and Lower Onion Creek, where flooding has been severe and impactful to residents of the neighborhoods. The Task Force heard tragic and personal stories of loss and grief from people around the City who suffered flooding in their homes, often on more than one occasion. Some have lost their homes and have been a part of the Buyout program, which has often been a slow and intimidating process, leaving people feeling frustrated and angry. Some did not lose their homes and don't qualify for buyouts, but suffered flooding for a myriad of reasons, from overloaded storm drainage systems, to poorly maintained drainage systems, to increased impervious cover from development, and poor drainage designs from decades past. These people are faced with continued threats to their lives and property from flooding and they are anguished.

During the 9 months that the Task Force has been working as a team, certain overarching as well as specific issues came to the fore as of particular interest. In general the Task Force recommends:

1. City Council should adopt a city-wide flood mitigation prioritization policy based on loss of life, general health and safety, and property damage. All subsequent city council policy and budget decisions should be made through this framework. Before increasing fees or calling bond elections, Council should undertake a review of the entire City budget, specifically items related to priorities to keep the citizens of Austin safe, and make difficult decisions about how we prioritize spending and fund the projects we must do to keep our residents safe.
2. Funding large capital projects should be accomplished through bonds and available grants, not through the Drainage Utility Fee (DUF). The DUF should only be used for smaller capital improvement projects that are less critical and can be accomplished within a reasonable time frame. Further, only capital projects that are identified as mitigating life and safety issues should be funded initially. In other words, nuisance flooding (flooding that only impacts streets and yards) needs to be tolerated in light of the expansive and expensive list of capital projects already identified by the Watershed Protection Department.
3. Bonds should be let starting in 2016. Drainage bonds have not been funded since 2006.
4. The Watershed Protection Department's Operations and Maintenance budget should be funded to a sufficient level so as to provide necessary resources for maintenance, including regular clearing and cleaning of creeks and streams PLUS providing necessary personnel and resources during flood events that arise.
5. Complete Lower Onion Creek and Williamson Buyouts as soon as possible and include targeted property buyouts in Upper Onion Creek.
6. Create partnerships with other jurisdictions (local, state, and federal) to solve common flooding issues. For example, create a Flood Control District through a partnership with Travis, Blanco, and Hays Counties and other local municipalities to address flooding along Onion Creek.

7. All redevelopment should have to meet drainage criteria assuming an undeveloped condition, reducing runoff leaving the site to "greenfield" conditions.
8. City Council should conduct a periodic (e.g. every 5 years) financial and organizational audit of the Watershed Protection Department to evaluate staffing resource allocations, program effectiveness, and the successful implementation of master plan goals and objectives.
9. Initiate Public Education & Outreach Program to ensure that Austin residents and visitors understand and prepare for floods to minimize impacts.
10. Work with city, state, and county authorities to continue to restrain development in 100-year floodplains.
11. The City should not grant variances for development or redevelopment that may lead to future flooding or annex property that may already be a flood concern, and;
12. The City should only use buyouts when absolutely necessary. The buyout process is a very emotional event for both the property owner and the neighborhood, appears to generally affect persons already struggling with Austin's affordability issues, and can destroy communities.
13. Ensure accountability and effectiveness of Regional Stormwater Management Program.
14. Integrate green stormwater infrastructure with standard CIP solutions (gray infrastructure), where appropriate.
15. Regulatory recommendations that are identified in the report should be implemented as soon as administratively possible (i.e. do not wait for CodeNEXT).
16. Immediately expand the scope of the Onion Creek Flood Study to include the Centex quarries and all other Onion Creek options upstream to further quantify possible approaches and potential mitigation solutions for Onion Creek.
17. Be aggressive in implementing these recommendations—do what can be done as soon as it can be done. Many suggestions can be started immediately with no new funding. Other recommendations can be accomplished by shifting citywide priorities.
18. Expand the Flood Early Warning System to a regional scale.
19. Make permanent the Flood Mitigation Task Force for oversight of the above detailed recommendations.

The members of the Flood Mitigation Task Force all appreciate the opportunity to serve the City and tackle these complex issues. We all agree that flooding is a great and growing threat to our city residents and visitors' health, safety and property, and we stand ready to continue to work with the City to ensure that our concerns and recommendations are fully understood and acted upon.